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THE
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

AN EXPOSITION

BY

ADOLPH SAPHIR.

*Author of "Christ and the Scriptures,"
"The Divine Unity of the Scriptures," etc., etc.*

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CROWNING POINT: CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN.

HEBREWS viii. 1.

JESUS is our High Priest in heaven. This is the crowning-point in which all the previous teaching of our epistle culminates. It is the summary of the apostle's preceding argument, in the sense that it is the highest and central-point towards which his exposition had constantly tended, and in which all the truths which he had deduced from Scripture are manifested in the clearest and most convincing light. "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

This crowning-point may be perceived already in the very commencement of the epistle; for there the apostle declares, that God has spoken

to us in His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also He made the worlds ; and that Jesus, after having by Himself purged our sins, took His position, according to the prophetic word, at the right hand of God, where He is now in royal power and dignity. If as Son Jesus is at the right hand of God, then it follows of necessity that the whole dispensation connected with the priesthood of Aaron and the first sanctuary has vanished, and that, no longer on earth, but in the Holy of Holies is now the true and eternal High Priest, the Minister of the new and better covenant. Here is the solution of all the difficulties which perplexed the Hebrews ; here the only safety and consolation amidst the persecutions and temptations which pressed sorely upon them living in the midst of the Jews, who were still cleaving to that which was vanishing away.

The Lord Jesus is our High Priest in heaven. These simple but majestic and weighty words sum up the teaching of the first eight chapters of our epistle. This is the crowning-point of the apostle's profound and massive argument, Jesus, who suffered and died, is consecrated the priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, after the power of an endless life. He is the minister of the heavenly sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. The apostle seems to a superficial reader to interrupt frequently the thread of his argument, when

out of the abundant love, sorrow, and solicitude of his heart he addresses solemn warnings and exhortations to the Hebrews, but he never for a single moment loses sight of that luminous centre of doctrine and consolation, Christ, the Priest in heaven ; his constant aim is to direct the minds and the hearts of the Hebrews to that perfection which in the glorified Saviour is given to all believers. In the very first verses he sounds the key-note, describing Jesus as the Son, and declaring His royal priesthood. The eternal glory of the Son, His divine power in creation, His central position in the future inheritance, His supremacy over the angels, His session at the right hand of God—all these great truths are brought before us, to show how perfect is the royal priesthood of Him who is on the throne. His true and real humanity, the mystery of His incarnation, is brought before us in the second chapter and for the same purpose ; He was made like unto His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest. When in the third chapter the Lord Jesus is contrasted with Moses, it is to show that Jesus, the High Priest, is the perfect Mediator, that He, the Son, is greater than Moses, the servant. Our responsibility is indeed greater than that of Israel in the wilderness, yet while it becomes us in our earthly pilgrimage to take heed, to fear, and to labour in

order to enter into rest, and while the Word of God is given unto us, that it may judge and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, we have more abundant reason to hold fast our profession, beholding Jesus, the great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, boldly we draw near to the throne of grace, for He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. (Chap. iv.) And after showing how Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of priesthood, being chosen from among men and called of God, and how in the garden of Gethsemane He entered into the lowest depth of human weakness and obtained the victory in the severest test of faith, he reminds the Hebrews that Jesus, being made perfect, both by the obedience which He learned by the things He suffered, and by His resurrection and ascension, was addressed by God as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. (Chap. v.) Thus he has reached the long-desired and much-loved summit, but before he describes the glorious sanctuary, which opens here to our view his heart fails him by reason of the weak and infantine condition into which the Hebrews had lapsed, and by a most solemn and piercing, yet affectionate exhortation, he entreats them to go on unto perfection, that is unto that which is within the veil, to behold Him who by His death became the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

What is implied in this mysterious and comprehensive word, uttered by David when he was in the Spirit, and uttered by him as the solemn declaration and oath of the Most High, is explained in chapter vii. and again in this chapter, in connection with the new and everlasting covenant in which we stand. For if the priesthood is changed, there is of necessity also a change of the dispensation. And this according to God's counsel. For even Jeremiah, six centuries before the advent of our Lord, had announced that the Lord would make a new covenant with the house of Judah and Israel. The High Priest is in heaven, the covenant is new and eternal, and therefore the sanctuary must likewise be in heaven. And to this latter point our attention is now turned. The old dispensation had a priesthood and an earthly tabernacle. The new dispensation has a high priest and a heavenly sanctuary, and the worship of believers—all of whom are priests—is in spirit and in substance, that is, in heaven itself, in the holy of holies.

In no other portion of the new covenant Scriptures is the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus explained. Hence in this precious and most essential epistle, more than in any other book, stress is laid upon the ascension rather than the resurrection, and upon the fact that Jesus is in

heaven. In the book of Revelation also (between which and our epistle are many interesting and instructive points of resemblance and connection) heaven is brought before us ; but there it is in connection with the royal dignity and power of our glorified Redeemer. There we behold Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, in the midst of the throne. From Him proceed all the manifestations of the Creator-power and government of God ; and all the developments of history, as well as its ultimate consummation, are represented as having their central source in the Son of God, who died once, and who liveth now for evermore. But in our epistle heaven is viewed as the sanctuary, where the High Priest intercedes for us, and whence He bestows upon us all the benedictions of the new covenant in virtue of the blood, by which He entered into the holy of holies.

It has been noticed by attentive readers of the Scriptures that in this epistle, concerning whose authorship there is much difficulty, the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus is not brought forward prominently, as it is in all Pauline epistles. This remark is perfectly correct, and of great importance. Let me remind you that in all the epistles of the apostle Paul, as well as in most apostolic epistles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead holds a very prominent position. In this epistle it is mentioned but once, in that beau-

tiful passage where the apostle speaks of the God of peace who brought again (or rather brought up, *i.e.* to heaven, ἀναγαγὼν) from the grave the great Shepherd of the flock. And here also the reference to the resurrection is more, as leading to the ascension and consummation of His exaltation. In all other epistles, where the apostle speaks of man's justification, of man's renewal, and of the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not the ascension but the resurrection which is represented as the great crisis, and as the foundation. He, who was delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification. If we believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from dead, we shall be saved. Thus Paul teaches in his epistle to the Romans. "Now is Christ risen from the dead," is his triumphant exclamation in his epistle to the Corinthians, and therefore our faith is not vain, and we are no longer in our sins. Together with Christ—thus he explains to the Ephesians other aspects of this central truth, we, who were dead in trespasses and sins, were quickened, and as the first-born from the dead, Christ is the Head of the Church, is the teaching of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.* How important is the place assigned in them to the resurrection of our Lord in connection with the new life of

* Rom. iv. 25; x. 9; 1 Cor. xv.; Eph. i. 20; Eph. ii.; Col. i. 18; Phil. iii. 10.

the believer. As risen with Christ, he is to seek the things that are above, and in the description of the apostle's spiritual experience, we find that his great and constant desire was to know "the power of Christ's resurrection."

The question naturally arises: "Why is it that in the Epistle to the Hebrews the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is comparatively put into the background, and all the emphasis is laid upon the ascension?"

The answer is simple. The object of the Epistle to the Hebrews was to comfort and also to exhort the Jews, whose faith was sorely tried because they were excluded from the services of the temple in Jerusalem; to confirm unto them the great truth, that they had the reality and the substance of those things which were only temporary and signs, and that the real sanctuary was not upon earth but high in the heavens, and that Jesus had gone to be the minister of the holy things, and of the true or substantial tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. Hence all the emphasis must be laid upon this, that Jesus, the Son of God, in human nature, by virtue of the blood which was shed upon Golgotha, has entered above all heavens into the real and true heaven, and on the throne of God, according to the prediction of the 110th Psalm, is a priest now after the order of Melchisedec.

But in order to understand more fully what is meant by heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ is now exercising the office of High Priest, let us see with what great clearness the doctrine of the ascension of the Lord Jesus is brought forward throughout the whole of the new covenant Scriptures.

Before the incarnation, the true sanctuary was not yet made manifest; but when the Word of God was made flesh He tabernacled in the midst of us, and we beheld the glory of the Only-begotten. Israel was taught that God, who made the heavens and the earth, was omnipresent, and yet combined with this spiritual conception of the omnipresence of God was the revelation of a heavenly sanctuary, of an eternal throne, of a special locality, in which the presence and the glory of God were manifested, unto which the prayers and offerings of His people ascend, and from which divine blessings and powers descend.* With the advent of the Son of God commenced the full manifestation of heaven. At His birth the angels sang, Glory to God in the highest; for the incarnation of Jesus was the unfolding and the accomplishment of that eternal counsel, in which the glory of God shines forth most brightly. The announcement of Jesus to the first disciples, whom He gathered, was : From henceforth

* Compare next Lecture.

shall ye see the heavens opened. The kingdom of heaven is come, was the declaration of the Prophet of Galilee. He speaks of the kingdom of heaven and the reward in heaven to the poor in spirit, unto whom He unfolds the blessedness and the character of His kingdom and righteousness. And in that solemn and decisive moment, in which Jesus, the Son of God, the heavenly High Priest, is brought before the representative of the Aaronic priesthood and the old Levitical dispensation, His testimony is, "From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power."

Now let us look upon the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is narrated or testified in the Gospels.

I begin with the gospel in which the ascension, as an actual event, is not mentioned—the Gospel of John. The apostle, who dwells so emphatically on the divinity of the Lord Jesus, gives us no account of the ascension. Though not narrated, however, it is frequently alluded to; as in a similar manner the institution of the Lord's Supper is never mentioned by this evangelist, though his gospel is full of references to, and expositions of, that eating and drinking of which the Lord's Supper is the outward representation and blessed seal. Let us collect now the testimony of this gospel concerning the ascension. Jesus says to

Nathanael, "Ye shall see the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man," the great Mediator between heaven and earth. He says to Nicodemus, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Jesus here explains, that He had come down from heaven in order to go back again into heaven, to be the source of regeneration and life. Again, in the Saviour's arguments with the Jews, when they are astonished and offended at His words, especially at His declaration that He is the Bread come down from heaven, and that we are to live by Him, the Lord asks, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?"* Did He not refer to His ascension when He said to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come"?† Or when on that most solemn last night He spoke to His disciples "plainly"—"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father"‡—of His Father's house and its many mansions, of the place He was going to prepare for us, of His return unto glory, and not merely to the apostles, but before them to His heavenly Father. Lastly, what

* John vi. 62.

† John vii. 34.

‡ John xvi. 28.

fuller announcement of the ascension than His gracious and majestic words to Mary Magdalene: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."* When we consider these passages, which belong to every portion of this gospel, from its commencement to its conclusion, which consist of the Saviour's own words, addressed to inquirers, to opponents, to disciples, and to the Father; when we consider the manner in which the Lord connects in these passages His ascension with His pre-mundane glory, with His eternal relation to the Father, and with His mediatorial work, we feel that although the ascension of our Lord is not narrated by the Apostle John, it is taught by him in the most profound, radical, and comprehensive manner.

In the Gospel of Mark, which narrates the incidents of the life of Christ in the most terse and graphic style, the ascension of the Lord Jesus is mentioned in one verse, in which everything that is necessary is comprehended; namely, that He was taken away from the earth, and that He took His position at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

In the Gospel of Luke the ascension is narrated most fully and circumstantially. Both the place—

* John xx. 17.

Bethany, the mount of Olives—and the manner of His ascension are mentioned. “Jesus lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” The beloved physician, unto whom it was given to write the gospel of the Son of man, thus describes the ascension of our Lord with most instructive and touching detail. In his account we hear the loving voice and see the pierced hands of our blessed Saviour.

In the Gospel of Matthew the ascension is not narrated. It is distinctly implied in Christ’s reply to the adjuration of the high priest: “Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”* In this gospel Jesus is chiefly represented as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. The great object is to show that Jesus, though rejected and crucified by His people, is the theocratic Lord; that the stone rejected by the builders is the corner-stone. Hence the conclusion, while implying the ascension in the words, “All power is given unto me in heaven and earth,” points to the consummation of this age, to the restoration of Israel, and the Messianic reign.

Thus we have the most spiritual and theological

* Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

account of the ascension in the Gospel of John; the most concise and terse statement in the Gospel of Mark; the most circumstantial and, if I may say so, human description, entering into the affections of our Lord, in the Gospel of the physician Luke; and a statement of the ascension of Christ, with special reference to His theocratic position as the Messiah and King of the Jews, in the Gospel of Matthew.

Now pass we on to that which is, as it were, the neck, the connecting-link, between the gospels and the epistles and Revelation—the Acts of the Apostles, written by the evangelist Luke, the friend and companion of the apostle Paul.

We have in the first chapter of the book of Acts another account of the ascension, and from a different point of view. Let us only bring to the reading of the Scripture a reverential spirit, taking for granted that the men that wrote it, even apart from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, were men who approached their high task with the greatest solemnity and concentration of mind, whose every expression in the description of the grand events they narrate was based upon deep thought, and who always kept a specific and important purpose in view.

In the book of Acts the evangelist Luke wishes to describe to us how the root of that tree that was now to be developed was not on earth, but in

heaven. Therefore he shows unto us how, when Jesus parted with His disciples, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It is not, as it is generally explained, a question of ignorance, or a question of prejudice, but a question of true spiritual insight into the Word of God. They had been taught by our blessed Saviour after His resurrection that it was from not understanding the *whole* Scripture that they expected the glory of the Messiah to be revealed without or before His sufferings. It was impossible for Christ to enter into glory, unless first He died upon the cross. But now that He had died, that He had offered the sacrifice, and that His glorified humanity had come forth from the grave, what hindered Him to establish the kingdom of Israel? Why should not now the prophecies be immediately fulfilled? If the apostles had asked Jesus the question before His crucifixion, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" the Lord Jesus would have told them, that now it behoved Him to suffer. But now that He had suffered the question of the disciples was a perfectly correct one; nor does Jesus in any way contradict them, but His answer confirms the kingdom. He only tells them that it is delayed, it is postponed: there is a new development. The river has taken a new turn unforeseen by Israel.

Now is the time of the Church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles in one body. Its characteristic is not rule, but testimony; not power, but suffering; not Israel as a nation, and other nations, converted as such; but from among Israel and all the nations a peculiar people, unacknowledged and unloved by the world, witnesses who are to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven. It is in the Acts, and not in the Gospel of Luke, where it would not be in accordance with the scope of the whole book, that the ascension is related from this point of view. Jesus is King of Israel. He is not forgetting the earth, or the promises, which God had given to the fathers, of which He is the minister unto the circumcision. But in the meanwhile the apostles must be witnesses in Judæa, and in Galilee, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost ends of the earth. And finally, this Jesus shall so come in like manner, the angels declare, as ye have seen Him go up into heaven.

The first chapter having thus explained the relation of the ascended Lord to Israel, and the earthly promise, and the nature of the intermediate Church dispensation, which does not set aside or take the position of a substitute of the earthly promise of the Christocracy, the rest of the book narrates the acts, not so much of the apostles, as of the Lord Jesus, the glorified Head of the

Church. It is to the ascended Lord that Peter attributes the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. It is of Jesus in heaven, and of His return thence to fulfil the promises spoken of by all God's holy prophets since the world began (for Enoch, the seventh from Adam, spoke of the coming of the Lord with His saints), that the apostle of the circumcision testifies, after the first miracle in Jerusalem. It is to the ascended Lord Jesus that the prayer of the proto-martyr is directed. The ascended Jesus appears unto Saul of Tarsus, and calls him to be His disciple and His apostle to the Gentiles. The Lord from heaven appears throughout this book as the Head and Ruler of the Church; He guides and blesses His messengers; He opens the heart of Lydia; He comforts and encourages the fainting heart of the apostle Paul in Corinth; His hand is with the evangelists, so that many believe.* The whole life, strength, and victory of the Church are derived from Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, who is in this book called emphatically Lord.

Let us glance now at the Pauline Epistles. In the teaching of this apostle we naturally expect that the ascension should hold a prominent position; for it was as the ascended Lord of glory that Jesus first appeared unto him, and thus we find in all his epistles the triumphant conclusion, the glorious

* Chap. ii. 33; iii. 20; vii. 56; ix. 5; xvi. 14, &c.

consummation, of Christ's life and work on earth. He who was God manifest in the flesh was after His death "received up into glory."*

In the Epistle to the Philippians we can see more clearly and fully than in any other portion of Scripture the peculiarity of the apostle's inward life. There is no more vivid and accurate portrait of his spiritual individuality. In other epistles we learn more of his conflicts both before and after his conversion (Romans and Corinthians); here the features of his spiritual countenance are, as it were, in repose, and we behold them in their most real and their most beautiful and placid character. And throughout this epistle we see that *Christ in heaven* was the apostle's constant thought, strength, joy, and aim. His experience was different from that of the twelve disciples. In their case there was gradual development. They knew Jesus of Nazareth as their Master and Teacher, as the Prophet of Galilee, as their Friend. Even after recognizing in Him the Messiah, they did not understand the mystery of His sufferings. After three years' discipleship Philip asked, "Show us the Father." The risen Jesus taught them the whole counsel of God, and at Pentecost they entered into the full enjoyment of light. Not so with Paul. Jesus, the Lord from heaven, appeared unto him, and beholding Him, he

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

entered into a new region, a new life. Here he beheld God's righteousness ; here he beheld perfection in glory ; here he beheld the source of life and strength ; here he beheld joy, which no circumstances could cloud, and the hope of the consummation of blessedness. What is earth now to him ? What his former righteousness and all the national distinctions in which he used to trust ? What are all things compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus ?*

"To me to live is Christ," "Rejoice in the Lord." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord." "Christ in heaven," this is his aim and hope ; to be like Him, even in His glorious body, this is the perfection, heavenly in its character, for which at the return of the Lord he awaits in hope.

In the Epistle to the Romans, and in kindred epistles, the object of the apostle Paul is to lead the sinner to God. He begins with man in his present condition. He shows the depth of the fall, the guilt of sin, the helplessness of the flesh ; then the propitiation that was made by Christ, the death of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection, and the consequent gift of the Holy Ghost. He goes from earth upwards. Such is not the method of the apostle John. He always goes

* Phil. iii.

from heaven earthwards. He begins with God—the life that was with God from the beginning, the Word that was with God, and is now manifested to us. The apostle Paul begins with man, Jew or Gentile—the sinner guilty and condemned, dead and helpless. Now from this point of view the death and resurrection of Christ must needs form the centre. There all lines meet, as in the central *nexus*. Yet the end must always be Christ enthroned in heaven—Christ at the right hand of God. Thus, in answer to the question, “Who is he that condemneth?” his answer culminates in the heavenly exaltation of our Lord. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

In the Epistles to the Corinthians the apostle’s testimony is of Christ, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and he brings before us the glorious hope, “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.”† He describes the attitude of the believer, living in the spirit and liberty of the New Testament, as with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord; for the Lord Christ, exalted in heaven, is that Spirit.‡

Look again at his experimental and prophetic

* Rom. viii. 34. Compare also the expression, “Who is over all” (ix. 5); and the striking passage, Rom. x. 6.

† 1 Cor. xv. 48.

‡ 2 Cor. iii.

epistles. We have already referred to the Epistle to the Philippians, as a comment on the words: "Our citizenship is in heaven."* To the Thessalonians he writes more fully about our waiting for the Son of God from heaven, and of the descent of the Lord Himself to gather His saints.† In his Epistles to Timothy he concludes his exulting and rhythmical summary of Christian truth, "Received into glory," the first link of the golden chain being God manifest in the flesh.‡

Again, in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, which we may call Christological, referring chiefly to the person of Christ, the ascension of the Lord holds a very prominent position. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, although Christ is not spoken of as High Priest, yet His exaltation at the right hand of God is represented in the same manner as in our epistle. From the very outset the apostle speaks of all spiritual blessings as in heavenly places in Christ, and of the Lord as exalted by the Father far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion at His own right hand in the heavenlies, in order to be the head over all things to the Church. In like manner he connects in the fourth chapter Christ's rule over, union with, and gifts to the Church, with His ascension "far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." As in the Hebrews,

* Phil. iii. 20.

† 1 Thess. i. and iv.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Christ as High Priest is shown to be in heaven, so here Christ, the Head and Bridegroom of the Church, the Centre and Heir of all things. The Epistle to the Colossians contains the same teaching, and with some new aspects and applications. Here the apostle connects the pre-eminence of Christ, as the first-begotten of the dead and as the Head of the Church, with His eternal glory as the Word by whom all things were made. He shows that being risen and exalted with Christ we have been transplanted out of the region of law and earthly elements (touch not, taste not, handle not), out of the region of shadows and types, into the liberty and substance of heavenly realities; hence His exhortation, "Seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."* How very striking and close the resemblance is here with the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Thus we find in all (the other) Pauline writings the same importance attached to the culminating part of Christ's first advent—His ascension into heaven.†

* Compare Col. i. 15 with Heb. i. 1-3.

† Peter, who was an eye-witness of the ascension (as he was likewise one of the three favoured disciples who were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, and thus saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom; compare Matt. xvi. 28 with 2 Peter i 16), declared with joyous emphasis the heavenly exaltation and power of the Lord both in his addresses to the Jews (Acts passim), and in his epistles. "He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of

It is because the Son of man, who came down from heaven, hath ascended up into heaven, it is because Jesus is at the right hand of God, that He is the true and perfect mediator between God and man. Him we in common with all believers invoke, Him we adore as Lord; to Him, as exalted by the Father, pertaineth the name above every name, and the homage of the whole creature-world; unto Him, as the Lord in heaven, all celestial and earthly power is given, and all angelic orders are obedient to His command. From His throne in heaven He gives repentance and the remission of sins; from thence He gives unto His Church all needful gifts, even as He at first sent forth the Holy Ghost, because He had been exalted by the right hand of God. From heaven He shall descend and gather His saints, changing their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body; from heaven He worketh now, and will work, until He hath subdued all things unto Himself.

Christ in heaven—this sums up all our faith.

Here is our righteousness, and our standing before God; here our storehouse of inexhaustible blessings, and of unsearchable riches; here

God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." "God raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory." (1 Peter iii. 22; i. 21.)

The book of Revelation is from beginning to end a testimony of the ascended Lord.

our armoury, whence we obtain the weapons of our warfare ; here is our citizenship, and the hope of our glory.

What is meant by the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens? In the first chapter the apostle had used the similar expression, "the right hand of the Majesty," and with evident reference to the prophecy of the 110th Psalm. The expression does not denote the omnipresence of God ; as the creed correctly and significantly says, "Sitteth at the right hand of the Father *Almighty*," Jesus is now on the throne of omnipotence. He ascended into the eternal, highest, and uncreated heaven. The term denotes the rank of equality which our Lord takes in His glory. He has entered into the participation of the sovereign authority.

The right hand is the place of affection, as well as of honour and dignity.* Christ is on the right hand of the Father, being His beloved Son, in whom He manifests His glory. The right hand is also the symbol of sovereign power and rule. Christ is Lord over all.

Great is the mystery of the incarnation—the

* So we are told in the 45th Psalm that the bride is to stand at the right hand of the King. As the apostle explains in the epistle to the Corinthians, in accordance with this, the husband is the head of the woman ; Christ is the head of the Church ; God is the head of Christ. The husband is the head of the wife ; God is the head of Christ. The wife is the glory of the husband ; Christ is the glory of God.

Son of God in human nature, both before and after His exaltation. It was not the human nature of Christ that suffered upon the cross, but the Son of God in human nature. It is not the human nature that is glorified at the right hand of the Father; but the Son of God in human nature, who humbled Himself, is now exalted above all heavens. Unto Him all power is given; the government of all things is upon His shoulder; Jesus rules now. In the book of Revelation His royal dignity is unveiled. There we behold the First-begotten of the dead possessing the keys of hell and of death; the Lamb, who alone can open the book; the Governor, the Lord; who overrules and directs all events; who controls all storms and tempests, and unto whose kingdom all developments of history, and all conflicts and movements among angels and among the nations on earth must serve; who shall finally be revealed, acknowledged, and obeyed as King of kings, and Lord of lords. The *royal* aspect of the word, "Sit thou at my right hand," is explained in the Apocalypse, where we behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne; in our epistle, the *priestly* aspect of the word is unfolded.

Heaven being the locality of Christ's priesthood, it must needs be perfect, eternal, spiritual, and substantial. What are the things in which Christ is now occupied as a priest? In one respect

He rests, because He finished His work upon the earth, and therefore He is described as sitting down on His Father's throne; His is now the perfect and peaceful rest of victory, for He has overcome. But, on the other hand, His is now a constant priestly activity. Every single individual that is brought unto God, is brought through His intercession; and day by day Christ is occupied with all His children who are upon earth, bestowing upon them the benefits which He has purchased with His blood, sustaining their spiritual life, and overruling all things for their good.

If Christ is in heaven, we must lift up our eyes and hearts to heaven. There *are* things above. The things above are the spiritual blessings in heavenly places.* “Seek those things which are above;”† faith and love, hope and patience, meekness, righteousness, and strength. The things above are also the future things for which we wait, seeing that our inheritance is not here upon earth. All that is pertaining unto the inheritance “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” belongs unto those things which Christ has now to minister in the tabernacle which God has made, and not man.‡ Our transfigured body, our perfectly enlightened mind, our soul entirely filled

* Eph. i. 3.

† Col. iii. i.

‡ Compare i Peter i.

with the love of God, all the strength and gifts for government (for we shall be called to reign with Christ upon the earth), all those powers and blessings which we have now only by faith and in germ, are in the heavenly places with Christ, who shall bring them to us when He comes again at the command of the Father.

Let us pause here to examine the character of our faith and of our walk in the light of this truth. Our High Priest is in *Heaven*. The New Covenant Scripture explains to us that there are two kingdoms, two realms, two atmospheres or methods of life. The one shall pass away, and the other shall remain for ever. The one is the world and the earth in its present condition; the other is heavenly, and shall abide for evermore. The one belongs to the first creation, and the power of sin and death; the other belongs to the second creation, to the power of redemption and life through righteousness. To *believe* is to see the things which are unseen and eternal. It is to behold the land that is afar off, and to take possession of it.* It is to enter into the kingdom† prepared for us from the foundation of the world, existing at present, and ready to be manifested at the appearing of our Lord. It is to cherish the lively, animating, and purifying hope of the in-

* "Faith is the discovery and conquest of a new country."—
J. MÜLLER.

† Matt. xxv. 34.

heritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, even the heavenly kingdom.* It is to be transplanted into this unseen and yet most real world of blessing and of power. It is to mind no longer earthly things,† and to have the affections set upon the things above. It is to be intrusted with the true riches.‡ Such is the nature of faith.§ It is to prefer spiritual things to carnal; eternal things to temporal; real things to things which are mere shadows.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.” Hence, the whole aim and purpose of our existence here below, all our endeavour, all our works, all our diligence, ought to be given to this one thing, the kingdom of God, which remains for ever. So, while we are occupied with earthly duties, our great object should always be to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven; to have our affections set upon the things which are above, that thus we may learn Christ in the occupations and discipline of our present life; to be filled with the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself, and obeyed the Father in love; to be heavenly-minded, as they who have a lively

* 1 Peter i. 4; Col. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 18.

† τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονούντες. (Phil. iii. 19.)

‡ ἀληθινόν. (Luke xvi. 11.)

§ Heb. xi. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 18.

hope, and whose citizenship is in heaven. Such is the Christian life—other-worldly, heavenly.

A spurious or superficial conversion dwells rather on the peace of God than on the God of peace, contemplates the cross of Christ and not the Christ of the cross, rejoices prematurely in deliverance from punishment, instead of cleaving in repentance and faith to Jesus, who delivers us from this present evil world, and raises us unto newness of life; heavenly in its character and hope. Wretched and fatal self-deception, to imagine that after a worldly, selfish, self-centred life upon earth we shall be transplanted into the kingdom of glory, into a blessedness of which we have had no foretaste, into an inheritance of which we have received no earnest in the gift of the indwelling Spirit. Jesus, who died on the cross, is now in heaven; it is only from heaven that the blessings of redemption, forgiveness, and the eternal love of God, are now bestowed by Him; He never delivers from the wrath to come without drawing us unto Himself, without separating us by His cross from the dominion of sin and the tyranny of self, without sending into our hearts the Spirit, as the Spirit of life. If our life is now hid with Christ in God, then, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. Our citizenship is in heaven, and Jesus, whom we now love and serve, will come to receive us unto Himself,

From the lowest depth of sin and guilt, of weakness and fear, look up to heaven, and behold there the great High Priest. It is because He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, that Jesus is on the throne of God. Behold in Him the forgiveness of sin, righteousness everlasting, perfect access to the Father, the fountain of renewing grace, of upholding strength, and of endless blessedness. Only believe! Our works and merit are of no avail. Into this height none can ascend. Jesus, who went to the Father, is the way. Faith beholds the great High Priest who died for sinners on the cross, and who as the sinner's righteousness is now before God; faith beholds Jesus at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and faith can rest, and worship, and say, "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is *my* God and *my* Father."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRUE TABERNACLE.

HEBREWS viii. 1, 2.

IT is the locality where the great High Priest now exercises His functions which the apostle emphasizes. Here the contrast is not so much that of law and gospel, of grace and works, as in other epistles; the contrast is between the earthly and temporary and the heavenly and eternal. In spirit and reality, the Levitical dispensation terminated when the veil of the temple was rent in twain; actually and in outward appearance, it continued till the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple declared unto all the world that the times of the old dispensation had come to an end. While the temple was still in existence, it was difficult for the Hebrews to understand the heavenly character of their calling and worship. It seemed to them that faith in the Messiah excluded them from the blessings and privileges of Messiah's nation. Levitical services in the earthly sanctuary still continued. Where was the place of believing Hebrews? The apostle shows that

Jesus is High Priest in heaven, and that therefore ours is a heavenly sanctuary, where all is substance, and possessed of an eternal vitality and glory.

All this is implied in the fundamental fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Lord said of Peter's confession that on this rock the church is built; but even Peter did not fully understand for some time the truths which necessarily follow from faith in the Christ, the Son of God. The Priesthood of the Son must needs be heavenly and eternal. It cannot be connected with the old covenant; but it is inseparably connected with the new, in which divine love and life are truly bestowed through the righteousness of grace, and in which forgiven and renewed sinners worship the Father in spirit and in truth. It must break down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile; for through the exalted Saviour the Spirit is given, by whom both have the same access to the Father. Hence the apostle returns at the end of the seventh chapter to the key-note struck at first—Jesus the Son.

If our High Priest is Jesus, God and man in one person, the only mediator, the sanctuary in which we worship is above. He is the minister* of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not

* λειτουργός—compare Isa. lxi. 6; Jer. xxxiii. 21; Neh. x. 40—an expression used for the service of the priests in the sanctuary, especially as connected with the sacrifices and offerings.

man. This tabernacle is contrasted with the tabernacle in the wilderness. It is "true," in the sense in which Jesus says, "I am the *true* vine; that is, the real and substantial vine, of which the outward and visible vines are merely emblems.

In the second place, this tabernacle was made, not with hands, and not through the mediation of human beings, as was the tabernacle in the wilderness; but it was made by God Himself. And, in the third place, this tabernacle is not a tent in the wilderness, but it is an abiding place in the heavens, there to be for ever.

The tabernacle is one of the most important and instructive types. Here is such a variety of truths, here is such a fulness and manifoldness of spiritual teaching, that our great difficulty is to combine all the various lessons and aspects which it presents.

Now, the tabernacle has no fewer than three meanings.

In the first place, the tabernacle is a type, a visible illustration, of that heavenly place in which God has His dwelling. In the second place, the tabernacle is a type of Jesus Christ, who is the meeting-place between God and man. And, in the third place, the tabernacle is a type of Christ in the Church—of the communion of Jesus with all believers.*

* The analogy between the tabernacle and man, or rather the

Moses, when he went up into the mount, after the glory of the Lord had appeared unto him and unto the elders, received from God a wonderful

individual believer, has struck Luther. He calls the outer court the body, the holy place the soul, and the most holy the spirit. As the passage is in itself interesting and instructive, I add a translation. Speaking of the *Magnificat* (Luke i. 46), Luther says: "Scripture divides man into three parts, as the apostle writes (1 Thess. v. 23), 'The God of peace sanctify you wholly; that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved unblameable.' And each of these three, as well as the whole man, is divided in another manner into two, spirit and flesh, which is a division, not of human nature, but of its condition. That is, each of the three may be either good or bad, spiritual or carnal, of which subject we do not treat here. The spirit is the highest and noblest in man, whereby he is able to grasp incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things; and it is, in short, the dwelling-place of faith, and of God's word, of which David speaks (Ps. li. 12), put into my inmost being a right spirit. (Compare Ps. lxxviii. 37.) The second is the soul; that is, the same spirit according to its natural aspect, in so far as it animates the body, and is often called in scripture life; for the spirit can live without the body, but not the body without the spirit. This soul, we notice, lives and works constantly even in our sleep, and can perceive and understand, not spiritual things, but the things of reason; for reason is the light in this house, and the soul cannot be free from error unless the spirit illumines and rules it with faith or the higher light. . . . The third is the body with its members, the works of which are only exercise and habit, according to the knowledge of the soul, and the faith of the spirit. . . . Now of this I shall show a similitude from Scripture. Moses made a tabernacle with three distinct parts. (Exod. xxvi. 33, 34.) The first, *sanctum sanctorum*, where God dwelt, and in which there was no light. The second, *sanctum*, in which stood the candlestick with seven branches. The third was called *atrium*, or court, that was without, and in the open daylight. Which is a picture of the Christian. His spirit is *sanctum sanctorum*, God's dwelling-place, in faith without sight; for he believes what he cannot see, or feel, or comprehend. His soul is *sanctum*, in which are seven lights, reason, discernment, knowledge, and understanding of outward things. His body is *atrium*, this is open

revelation.* There was shown unto him—in what manner it is impossible for us to conceive—a pattern of the heavenly places; not the heavenly realities themselves, but he beheld, most likely in a vision, the model of heavenly places, the picture of heavenly realities. And according to that model he was instructed to give the orders in the framing of the tabernacle, and to execute the design; so that the tabernacle in the wilderness was to be a faithful representation of what he had seen, as far as it is possible to represent heavenly and spiritual realities by outward and visible things. Surely when God showed unto Moses the pattern of heavenly things, He showed unto him also the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, by whom there would be brought about not merely a reconciliation, but also the indwelling of God in the hearts of His people; and as Abra-

and patent to all, and every one can see what he does, and how he lives.” No doubt this analogy is correct. (Compare on the distinction—soul and spirit, 1 Cor. ii.) What is true of the whole Church, is true of each individual member; but to find in this the purport of the tabernacle chiefly or exclusively is erroneous and untenable.

* It is stated four times in the book of Exodus that the tabernacle was built after the pattern shown in the mount. (Exod. xxv. 9, 40; xxvi. 30; xxvii. 8.) To this Stephen also alludes. (Acts vii. 44.) In like manner the temple was built according to divine direction, as we read (1 Chron. xxviii. 11) that “David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses, . . . and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit.” (Compare Heb. ix. 8, where, speaking of the high priest’s yearly entrance into the Holy of Holies, it is said, “The Holy Ghost this signifying.”)

ham saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced and was glad in it—as Isaiah, when he heard the trisagion of the seraphim, beheld the glory of the Lord, even of the Christ,*—so there can be no doubt that, when Moses the man of God was on the mount, there was revealed unto him the mystery of the counsel of God, the incarnation, and the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The tabernacle presented wonderful truths† to Israel. In the sacrifices and ordinances of the tabernacle God declared unto His people the forgiveness of their sins; He brought them near unto Himself through expiation and mediation; He healed their diseases and comforted their hearts. But the ultimate object in all this was to reveal Himself, to manifest His divine perfection, to show forth His glory. In all the gifts of pardon, and in all the privileges of approach unto God, the Lord revealed the perfection and manifold glory of Himself. Here Israel beheld the glory of the Redeemer-God. Everywhere the twofold object was accomplished, the need of sinful, guilty, and failing man was supplied, and in this very grace the character and glory of Jehovah was revealed. Thus, as in Christ crucified we possess all we need, and behold all the thoughts and purposes of God,

* John xii.

† Psalm cxix. 18: "Wondrous things." (Compare Lectures V. and VI.)

so in the tabernacle the believing Israelite, receiving pardon and help, was taught to exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee?"

The tabernacle was a symbol of God's dwelling. There is a sanctuary, wherein is the especial residence and manifestation of the glorious presence of God. Solomon, although he confesses that the heaven of heavens cannot contain God, yet prays that the Lord may hear in heaven His dwelling-place.* Jeremiah testifies, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."† The visions of Isaiah and of Ezekiel also bring before us the heavens opened and the likeness of a throne, and the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon the throne.‡ Of this heavenly locality David speaks, when he asks, Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?§ In the book of Revelation we receive still further confirmation of this truth. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of the covenant;" and again, "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened."|| As in the tabernacle there was a distinction between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, so we read

* 2 Chron. vi. † Jer. xvii. 12. ‡ Ezek. i. 26, and *passim*.

§ Psalm xxiv. 3.

|| Rev. xi. 19; xv. 5.

of the throne of God and of the temple of the Redeemed, of mount Zion and of the heavenly Jerusalem. Almost all expressions which are employed in describing the significance of the tabernacle, are also used in reference to heaven. As in heaven so in the tabernacle God has His dwelling, and manifests His grace and glory. The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. His manifestation in the tabernacle is generally called glory. God, the King, has His palace in the midst of His people. His palace is the sanctuary. The throne, from which He issues His royal law and the declaration of His sovereign grace, is between the cherubim, a symbol of the heavenly throne of divine majesty. "The temple of thy holiness" is the name both of the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary.*

God, who dwells in heaven, and from His heavenly throne dispenses all blessings, manifests Himself on earth and holds communion with His people, and the place or sanctuary chosen for this purpose is a symbol of heaven, and there subsists a real connection between the celestial archetype and the earthly image. When Jacob awoke out of his sleep, in which the Lord appeared unto him, he said, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." In the sublime prayer of dedication, Solomon constantly

* Psalm v. 7; Habakkuk ii. 20.

expresses the same thought: "That thine eyes may be open toward *this house*, even toward *the place* of which thou hast said, My name shall be there. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servants, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in *heaven thy dwelling-place*."

But the tabernacle is, secondly, a type of the Lord Jesus Himself. For it is in Him that God dwells with us; in Him dwells the fulness of Godhead bodily, that we dwelling in Him should have communion with the Father.

See the fulfilment of the type in the first place in the Incarnation. "A body hast thou prepared for me." He was born of the Virgin Mary, conceived of the Holy Ghost. God, and not man, built this tabernacle. He dwelt in the midst of us even as the tabernacle was in the midst of the people. And as that tent, although it was made of materials which were common and earthly, was irradiated and sanctified by the indwelling glory of the Lord, so although He was born of the Virgin Mary, and was in every respect like unto His brethren, and was found in fashion as a man, yet is the humanity of Jesus called that holy thing, for it is the tabernacle in which was beheld the glory of the Only-begotten.

In the second chapter of the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus explains unto us how He is not merely the tabernacle, but the temple that was

to endure for ever. This temple had first to be broken, Jesus had to die, but it was to be built again on the third day by His resurrection. This is still more fully explained, when it is said that the veil of the temple was rent in twain. As the apostle teaches us, this refers to the crucifixion of our Lord, the veil of His flesh was then rent. For then heaven was not merely revealed, but the way of access was opened to all sinners who believe in Jesus. Nay, more than this. Jesus Himself went thereby into the holy of holies. And now we behold Him at the right hand of God, the true tabernacle, in which all believers worship, even in the very presence of God, before the throne, which is now a throne of grace.

Thus do we dwell in Him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead; and thus has the Father brought us into His very presence, even in His Son, in a way which could not be adequately symbolized. It was by a gradual development that Jesus became the true tabernacle. First, by His incarnation. The tabernacle was pitched of God, and not of man. The Holy Ghost came upon the Virgin Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her. Then Jesus, in His holy humanity, in His perfect walk of obedience, in His words and works, manifested the Father: God was with Him · the Father was *in Him*; the

glory of the Only-begotten shone through His body of humiliation. Then, by His death on the cross, the holy place became, as it were, the holy of holies; the veil being rent, all that separated God from sinners was removed according to righteousness. Then, by His resurrection and ascension, He actually entered in—as our representative—for us, and, so to say, with us.

It is difficult to combine all the aspects of Christ, who is Sanctuary, Priest, Sacrifice; but the more we dwell on Him as the One who is all, the more fully are our hearts established. Behold Him, then, as the tabernacle, where all sacred things are laid up. All that was in the tabernacle is in Him. He is the true Light, the true Bread of the countenance, the true Incense of intercession, with which our prayers and offerings come before God. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are in Christ.*

But the tabernacle has yet a third aspect. There God and His people meet. The ark of the covenant was not merely the throne where God manifested Himself in His holiness, but it was also the throne of relationship with His

* ■ All the utensils of holy worship of old, all means of sacred light and purification, were placed and laid up in the tabernacle. And these were all patterns of the heavenly things themselves, which are all laid up in Christ, the true tabernacle. They are all inclosed in Him, and it will be in vain to seek for them elsewhere."—OWEN, *Hebrews*, vol. iii. p. 666.

people. In all the offerings and sacrifices God was manifested, just as regards sin, merciful as regards the sinner ; there also God and the sinner met. So throughout the tabernacle there was the manifestation of God, in order to bring Israel into communion with Himself. In the tabernacle man's fellowship with God was symbolized through manifold mediations, sacrifices, and offerings. But in Jesus we have the perfect and eternal fulfilment. In Him God and the sinner meet ; in Him God and the believer dwell and have communion. In and from Jesus we have received the Spirit. God now dwells in His saints by His Spirit, whereby they become an holy temple unto Him. We are builded together *in Him* (Christ) for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* We are, according to the testimony of another apostle, a spiritual house, in which sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving and obedience are continually brought unto God. In this chosen Temple God has His rest and His joy. This is the glorious gospel : God in Christ, we in Christ, Christ in us.

Thus we have seen that the tabernacle was a picture of heaven, a type of Christ Jesus, and of Christ Jesus in the saints. And therefore, when Jesus Christ comes again with His saints, it will be said, "Lo, the tabernacle of God with men." True,

* Eph. ii. 21, 22.

there is a locality where Christ and His saints have their abode. But the glory and substance of that heavenly place is the Lord Jesus, one with the saints. In thinking of the throne of God and of heaven, we must avoid a phantomising hyper-spiritualism, and on the other hand a carnal and materialistic view. Heaven is not a state merely, but a place ; yet in our present condition it is not possible for us to form a conception of that spiritual, substantial, and eternal abode which God has prepared for them that love Him. It is sufficient for us to receive the Scripture statements, and to rejoice in the descriptions given in the prophetic books, and especially in the Apocalypse, of the glorious home, of the beautiful and eternal city, in which the Lamb and His Bride shall dwell. It is enough for us to believe the word of Jesus, so simple and sweet : " In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you."*

* *Τόπον*. Is it merely figurative language which the apostles use when they speak of the city of the living God, and proclaim what they beheld in the Spirit ? One day John stood on the mount of Olives, and beheld the city of Jerusalem at his feet, while the Lord ascended into the heights above. Again, on the Lord's-day, he was in the Spirit ; an angel led him to a high mountain, and he beheld another Jerusalem descending from heaven. He numbered the gates of this holy city, and measured its walls ; he recognized in the Lamb the temple and the light of the city. All this does not sound like mere imagery and similitude. Let us not exchange the green pastures thus revealed to our eyes for the vague abstraction of a colourless existence. There is a higher world in the strictest sense of the word ; and into this world, His home, the Saviour returned when He ascended.—STEINMEYER.

It is in heaven, and in heaven only, that the Lord exercises His priesthood. "For if Jesus were on earth He would not be a priest at all." As our Lord belonged to the tribe of Judah, and not to the tribe of Levi, it would have been impossible for Him to exercise the functions connected with the Aaronic priesthood. How forcible a demonstration to the Jews, who saw the priests of Levi performing their daily office in the temple at Jerusalem. Godly Israelites might even in those days be taught by the image and pattern of heavenly realities; but those Israelites, who had recognized in Jesus the Messiah, were now to walk in the clear brightness of the gospel light, and in the fulness of the day to perceive the temporary and fragmentary character of the Levitical dispensation.

But as with the Jews, so with us all, the great difficulty is, to realise the spiritual and heavenly character of worship. To lift up our eyes and hearts to heaven, to feel the power and the reality of things unseen, to hold communion from the heart, as *man's* holy of holies, with God Himself in *His* holy of holies—this is, indeed, the gift and grace of God, and blessed are all whom He chooses and causes to approach.*

* "The glory and worship of the temple was that which the Jews would by no means part withal. They chose rather to reject Christ and the gospel, than to part with the temple, and its outward pompous worship. And it is almost incredible how the vain mind

Now of the holy things,* the spiritual and heavenly blessings, and of the true tabernacle, Jesus is the minister or priest. He is ministering before God and towards God on our behalf; He

of man is addicted unto an outward beauty and splendour in religious worship. Take it away, and with the most you destroy all religion itself: as if there were no beauty but in painting, no evidence of health, or vigour of body. The Christians of old suffered in nothing more from the prejudice of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, than in this, that they had a religion without temples, altars, images, or any solemnity of worship. And in latter ages men ceased not, until they had brought into Christianity itself a worship vying for external order, ceremony, pomp, and painting, with whatever was in the tabernacle or temple of old, coming short of it principally in this, that that was of God's institution for a time, this of the invention of weak, superstitious, and foolish men. Thus is it in the church of Rome. And a hard thing it is to raise the minds of men, unto a satisfaction in things merely spiritual and heavenly. They suppose they cannot make a worse change, nor more to their disadvantage, than to part with what is a present object and entertainment unto their senses, fancies, carnal affections, and superstitions, for that which they can have no benefit by, nor satisfaction in, but only in the exercise of faith and love, inclining us to that within the veil. Hence is there at this day so great a contest in the world about tabernacles and temples, modes of worship and ceremonies, which men have found out in the room of those which they cannot deny but God would have removed. For so they judge that He will be satisfied with their carnal ordinances in the church, when the time is come that He would bear His own no longer. But unto them that believe, Christ is precious. This true Tabernacle, with His ministration, in their estimation far excels all the old pompous ceremonies and services of divine institution, much more, all the superstitious observances of human invention."—*Owen*.

* The expression *τῶν ἁγίων* is here neuter, and does not refer to holy persons, or those sanctified by Jesus. It seems to refer to holy things, those things which are essentially connected with the heavenly sanctuary, both the offering which Christ presents to the Father, and the blessings which He sends down to the Church.

is continually bestowing upon us the blessings of the new covenant. There was no approach unto God without continual respect unto sacrifice and oblation. However excellent the person of the high priest, it was an absolute necessity, that He should have somewhat to offer. And thus our great High Priest had somewhat to present unto the Father when He entered into heaven. The sacrifice, we know, was offered when Jesus died upon the cross. What was typified on the day of atonement, found its fulfilment on Golgotha. Jesus died outside the camp.* His precious blood was shed on the accursed tree.† But as was already understood in the type, the blood of Jesus, though shed on earth, pertains to the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus presents Himself, the victim, before the Father, and enters by His own blood into the holy of holies. This is the only perfect and efficacious oblation. This is the only true and real propitiation or atonement made for our sins. Jesus Himself could not save us, or bring us unto God without this sacrifice; it was necessary that He should bring Himself, the victim and substitute, before the throne of God.

But now the High Priest, by virtue of the one

* Matt. xxvii. 32, 33; John xix. 17, 18. (Compare also Acts vii. 58; Heb. xiii. 12.)

† Compare the important declaration of Deut. xxi. 23. There is a reference to the manner of Christ's death in His word, John xii. 32. He was to be "lifted up from the earth."

sacrifice, is in heaven. There can be only one temple. There was only one ark in the days of Noah, one tabernacle in the wilderness, one temple in Jerusalem. The forgiving, merciful, and glorious presence of Jehovah is manifested now in the throne on which Jesus is exalted. Now that the Antitype is in heaven, and the living reality of every act of the ritual is fulfilled, and that abidingly, the earthly type has no longer divine right and sanction to exist. Before the coming of Jesus, the shadows symbolized truth to believing worshippers. After the coming of Jesus it must fade and vanish before the substance.

If this is true of the Levitical priesthood, which was of divine appointment, how much more fearful is the assumption of any priestly title, position, and function during the new dispensation. All Christians are priests. To imitate a revival of that which God Himself has set aside by a fulfilment perfect and glorious, is audacious, and full of peril to the souls of men. It is not even the shadow of a substance; but the unauthorised shadow of a departed shade. The one sacrifice and oblation has been offered on Golgotha, and presented to the Father by the ascended Saviour, *once for all*;* and now believers are a

* How true and obvious is Owen's remark: "If any one else can offer the body of Christ, he also is the minister of the true taber-

kingdom of priests, drawing near in full assurance of faith.

The apostle Paul connects "the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." (Rom. ix.) These go together, and the character of one link determines that of the rest. In the first dispensation, of which Moses was the mediator and Aaron the priest, the service was connected with an earthly tabernacle, and the promises also possessed an earthly and temporal character. How much more glorious is the new dispensation, where all is substance, and not shadow; heavenly and eternal, and not earthly and temporal! Here one Person is Mediator-Priest; the law is written on the heart; the service is in spirit and in truth; the promise is life eternal. True, the contrast between the old and the new would be viewed in a false light, if we forgot that in the old dispensation spiritual reality and blessings were presented, and were actually embraced in faith by the people of God. The law had a positive or evangelical aspect; although herein also it was elementary and transitory, it acted as a guardian and a tutor; as the snow is not merely an indication of winter, and a contrast to the bright and genial sunshine, and the refreshing verdure of summer,

nacle. For the Lord Christ did no more. He did but offer Himself, and they that can offer Him do put themselves in His place."

but is also a beneficent protection, cherishing and preparing the soil for the approaching blessings from above. But now the winter is past, the fulness has come. The sanctuary being changed, the dispensation and covenant are likewise changed. The new covenant is now revealed, of which Jesus is both Surety and Mediator. In a previous chapter the apostle had inferred, from the superior excellence of the Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the superiority of the covenant, of which He is Mediator. He calls Jesus the Surety of a better testament. The expression reminds us that the Lord Jesus gave unto the Father all that divine righteousness and holiness demanded, that He gave to man every pledge and assurance of our full and everlasting salvation. In the Lord Jesus, who sanctified Himself for our sakes, the Father possesses all believers; in Him all believers are brought into communion with divine love and life. The expression, "Mediator," used here is more comprehensive.*

The mediator and surety of the old covenant was Moses, and not Aaron. Yet since the first covenant also could not be instituted without sacrifice, Moses acted as priest; the priestly dignity and functions were afterwards transferred to Aaron. But now is Jesus the true and eternal

* It occurs only in two other Pauline passages. The somewhat obscure passage, Gal. iii. 20, and 1 Tim. ii. 5.

Mediator-Priest; not a servant like Moses, but the Son. True mediation is accomplished now because the Mediator as the Son is in the heavenly sanctuary at the right hand of God, and because from thence He sends the Spirit into our hearts.

This newcovenant is based upon better promises. The expression "established" means formally established as by a law. It reminds us that here all is arranged, fixed, and secured by inviolable sanctions. The "everlasting covenant is ordered in all things, and sure;"* it is based upon immovable foundations; it is according to the eternal purpose of God and to the divine and unchanging perfections.

The promises are better, because they are now clearly and directly spiritual and eternal. Forgiveness of sin, the knowledge of God, communion with God, His indwelling in our hearts, the inheritance reserved in heaven, such are the promises and gifts of the new covenant. The promises are better because they are unconditional, secured by the great Mediator and High Priest. They are better because they were given to Christ before the world began, and are according to the infinite love which the Father has to His only Son, in whom He hath chosen us. The promises are better because in the new dispensation the blessing comprehends all, Jews and Gentiles, and unites all

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

believers as a royal priesthood, who have access unto the Father by one Spirit.

There is a wonderful simplicity in the new covenant revelation. The true light which now shineth does indeed possess an exceeding greater brightness than that of the old dispensation ; and yet everything is full of simplicity, directness, and peaceful calm. When we contrast the old and the new, then we become conscious of the wonderful transparency, simplicity, condensation of divine teaching which we possess. Our little children possess in the words Jesus, Lamb of God, trust in the Saviour, in the simple gospel declarations and promises, that which the old saints had to combine laboriously from the necessarily fragmentary types and teachings, and could only see darkly. We look to Jesus for everything ; we have and receive all from Him. Our sins and infirmities, our trials and sorrows, so bind us to the grace of Jesus, and to His High Priestly ministrations, that we are constantly with Him, and experience the power of His blood, and the sustaining influence of His love. Jesus in heaven, at the right hand of God, the Lamb in the midst of the throne—this sums up all our faith, all our love, all our hope. *It is the crowning point.*

Looking back in the light of fulfilment on the history of God's dealings with mankind and with Israel, on the long and marvellous, the manifold

and complicated, yet harmonious events, ordinances, types and predictions, in which the wisdom and love of God veiled, and at the same time revealed, the central mystery of redemption, we are impressed with a sense of the magnitude and the glory of the new revelation in Christ Jesus, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us. We do not merely, like aged Simeon, rejoice in beholding the salvation which God hath prepared before all nations, but the salvation which He purposed in Himself from all eternity, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

How wonderful is the love of God, that from all eternity this was the secret, cherished purpose of His will—that He should manifest Himself in Christ Jesus, and bring poor, guilty, and helpless sinners nigh unto Himself, that they should dwell in Him, and that He should dwell in them. How wonderful is the grace of God—that purpose of grace which was in God before the foundations of the world were laid, according to which He has given unto us eternal life in Christ Jesus, that not in creation, that not in the perfection and purity of angelic beings, who never fell, but that in the redemption, and sanctification, and glorification of sinners there should be made manifest the fulness of God.

See then how everything leads you unto the

ultimate love of God. Conceive in an enlarged manner, and with an assured and blessed confidence, that all the thoughts of God concerning you are thoughts of peace. You cannot think too highly of the love of God. You cannot exaggerate how important you are in God's estimation, how precious your salvation is unto Him, how great is His joy and His delight in His people, how culminating is that position which He has given unto Christ as the head of the church, and how this is the one thought in God from everlasting to everlasting, so that in Christ Jesus and the church there should be summed up in one all things visible and invisible, whether they be in heaven or on earth. God loved us and chose us in Christ Jesus that we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens ;" and what is His throne but Christ Jesus, who is the tabernacle, and in whom we are also become the habitation of God.

Learn, in the second place, the wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Minister of the sanctuary. He is still going on with His service. His thoughts, His prayers, His affections, His energies, are all engaged now with regard to His people who are still upon the earth. He has ascended into the holiest, into the region of perfection and glory ; but not to forget us who are still in the wilderness. As He loved His

own even to the end, He loves them now, and throughout all the ages ; and He will come again to receive us to Himself. He is the same loving, serving Jesus as He was on earth, the minister of holy things even now. In the fulness of His love, power, and glory, our exalted Lord, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, is ministering continually on behalf of and unto the saints.

Thirdly. Learn here the true character of worship. This is more fully explained in the subsequent chapters of the Epistle. But from what we have seen, it is evident that it is only by faith we can worship, for only by faith we can discern the heavenly and spiritual realities here set forth.* The heavenly sanctuary is the only place of worship. We are brought into the very presence of God in heaven, we draw near in the one great High Priest, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins through His blood. Such are now the elements of worship, and only faith can realize and appropriate these gracious truths and gifts. Believers only can worship ; they worship in spirit and in truth.

* "The fundamental and essential contrast between the former and the latter things is, that the discernment by faith of things invisible is now the alone condition of true worship."—A. PRIDEAUX.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT.

HEBREWS viii. 6-13.

THE Lord Jesus Christ, as our High Priest in heaven, is the Mediator of the new covenant or dispensation, which is based upon better promises. New as contrasted with old means in Scripture that which is perfect and abiding. The old vanishes, the new remains. God gives us a new heart that we may love and praise Him for ever. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. "Behold, I make all things new," saith the Lord; I will create new heavens and a new earth; and in the new creation all is eternal, perfect, possessed of vitality, beauty, and strength, which can never fade.

The old covenant was temporary and imperfect. God findeth fault with it; for although the law was holy, just, and good, yet by reason of Israel's sin neither righteousness nor life could come through it. And as the purposes of divine love could not

be attained by the old covenant, so the character of God, as the God of grace, could not be fully revealed therein. Hence the promise of a new covenant, which in itself proves the imperfection and insufficiency of the old ; and this new covenant is represented as a contrast, *unlike* the old ; it is new, that is, perfect, everlasting. God is pleased with it because it shows forth the glory of Jehovah as the God of salvation.

Let us remember that this covenant, announced by the prophet Jeremiah, is to be made first with the house of Judah and the house of Israel. It is a spiritual covenant, yet a national one. To Israel pertain the covenants, both of law and of grace. This is taught by Scripture throughout, and most clearly in the chapters in which this precious promise of the Messianic covenant is contained. No one can read this section of the prophetic word * and entertain the slightest doubt that literal Israel, the seed of Abraham, and their restoration in their own land, form the subject of divine promise.

The prophet Jeremiah, called in early youth by God to announce unto his people the impending judgments on account of their ingratitude and impenitence, seems little fitted, by his natural disposition and temperament, to be the bearer of a message so awful and stern. A character eminently sensitive and tender, shrinking from

* Jeremiah xxx.—xxxiii.

conflict, almost feminine in his delicacy, was chosen by God to testify against the whole land, the kings of Judah, and the princes thereof, and against the priests, and against the people of the land. The Lord chose this gentle and timid child (Jer. i. 6) to be as a defenced city and an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole nation. The prophet's heart was overwhelmed with grief; his eyes were filled with tears. His soul was distracted; his heart was faint within him, when he would comfort himself against sorrow. The message, that Israel's sin and iniquity had so abounded that judgment was inevitable, filled him with anguish. How solemn and touching are the supplications which he pours out before God! While he was thus consumed by zeal for Jehovah and sorrowful love for his people, he had to experience constant and cruel opposition, hatred, and scorn. His life was continually in jeopardy. Persecution, ignominy, and reproach were heaped upon him. Driven to the utmost verge of despair, he exclaimed, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name." But the Word was in him as a burning fire shut up in his bones. He was faithful to God; and with a breaking heart testified against the nation and her false prophets. During forty years Jeremiah stood firm, a solitary witness among a rebellious and godless nation of adversaries and persecutors, led astray and forti

fied in their opposition by false prophets. He endured insult and mockery ; he was beaten and imprisoned. And when the armies of Babylon proved the divine character of his mission and the truth of his predictions, the lofty height to which God had raised him did not separate him from his nation, his previous sufferings did not embitter his heart or blunt his sympathy and affection. He sat down on the ground as a mourner, and his lamentations over Jerusalem are to this very day the expression of the grief of desolate and banished Israel.

Is he not a type of our Lord? Were the people, who said that Jesus was Jeremiah, not uttering a truth, which was then daily unfolding? For as Jeremiah announced the first destruction, so Jesus, in the days of Pharisees and scribes, predicted the second destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus wept when He beheld the city. And Jesus is greater than Jeremiah. For in the Spirit Jeremiah called Him Lord. Yet were the tears of Jeremiah in the Spirit of the Christ, who said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes."

It is in the night of adversity that the Lord sends forth bright stars of consoling hope. When the darkest clouds of woe were gathering above Jerusalem, and the prophet himself was in the

lowest depths of sorrow, God gave to him the most glorious prophecies of Judah's great redemption and future blessedness. The advent and reign of Messiah, the Lord our righteousness, the royal dominion and priesthood of Israel's Redeemer, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the renewal and restoration of God's chosen people, the days of unbroken prosperity and blessedness—all the golden Messianic future was predicted "in the last days of Jerusalem, when the magnificent fabric of its temple was about to sink into the dust, and its walls and palaces were about to be thrown prostrate on the ground." *

Thus, while Jeremiah announced the judgments of God, he was sustained and comforted by the promises of ultimate restoration and glory. Israel, the chosen nation of God, could not frustrate the purpose of God's grace by their unfaithfulness. God's promise unto Abraham rested upon no condition; it rested only on the electing, sovereign, free, and eternal love of God. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Israel's sin abounds unto judgment, and even (temporary) national death; but Jehovah's grace abounds unto resurrection-life, unto restoration and everlasting blessing. Jeremiah predicts the national restoration of Judah and Israel. In most emphatic words the Lord declares, that as the ordinances of

the sun, and moon, and of the stars shall not depart from before Him, the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation before Him. The prophet describes the prosperity of the cities of Judah, once desolate, and the melody and joy of the streets of Jerusalem, once filled with sorrow and lamentation.

But this national and external restoration and prosperity are inseparably connected with Israel's spiritual and inward renewal. It is the new covenant of grace in the Messiah, even King David, which brings life, strength, and joy to the chosen people. As the promise was of grace, to Abraham and to Abraham's seed, so the fulfilment of the promise is not through the old covenant, of which Moses is mediator, but in the new and eternal Messianic dispensation.

In like manner prophesied Ezekiel at the river Chebar among the captives of Babylon. He also beholds Israel restored; dwelling in their own land, in prosperity and gladness; the temple built in a new and glorious manner, and Jerusalem the city of the great king, whence the glory of Jehovah shall never depart again; for she shall be called Jehovah-Shammah (the Lord is there). For Israel restored and glorified is Israel pardoned, cleansed, and renewed. The blessing is both spiritual and national; the heart within and the land without; thus do all prophets testify, and thus the apostle of the

Gentiles explains to us in the light of the intermediate church-dispensation the counsel of God. Israel had once the land without the Spirit; Israel now has neither the land nor the spiritual knowledge of God and His love; but the time is coming when Israel shall possess the land, and receive the Holy Ghost from the Lord, whose feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives; in the liberty of the new covenant they shall worship and serve the Lord their God.

Apply this truth to the condition of the Hebrews, whom the apostle was addressing. The law of Moses, the old covenant, was vanishing; but the Messianic promises never were connected with the legal dispensation; they are rooted in the promise to Abraham; they are fulfilled in the covenant of grace. The relation of law to gospel as regards our justification, and also as regards the rule of life and conduct, is a different question, which is fully solved in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and in the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem. The question which troubled the minds and hearts of the Hebrews was their relation to the Levitical priesthood, and to the old dispensation. The temple was still in Jerusalem, and the Levitical ordinances appointed by Moses were still being observed. Although the Sun had risen, the moon had not yet disappeared. It was waning; it was ready to vanish away. Now it became an

urgent necessity for the Hebrew Christians to understand that Christ was the true and eternal High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, and that the new and everlasting covenant with Judah and Israel was connected with the gospel promise, and not with the law. God Himself hath made the first covenant old by promising the new. And now that Christ had entered into the holy of holies by His own blood, the old covenant had passed away; and yet the promises of God to His chosen people remain firm and unchanged.

This is the very question which unbelieving Israel has not been able to solve during the last eighteen centuries. The temple of Jerusalem has been destroyed; the Levitical economy has been taken away; Israel has neither high priest, nor sacrifice, nor altar; it is without temple, and it is, strictly speaking, outside covenant. Where is the old covenant? The sanctuary, with its ordinances of divine service, was intimately connected with the old covenant, with the Levitical dispensation. It has vanished. During all these centuries Israel has not been able to account for their strange condition. When Moses was on mount Sinai, and the people, in their unbelief and impatience, asked Aaron to make unto them gods which should go before them, they added: "For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become

of him." In like manner Israel, since the destruction of Jerusalem, cannot understand the dealings of God. They know not what has become of Moses, the old covenant. It is impossible for them to keep its ordinances. And in this darkness they have formed to themselves a religion of their own traditions and reasonings,* human and unauthorized substitutes for the divinely-appointed ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation. How clear is the light shining from the cross of Jesus and from the heavenly sanctuary, where the Mediator of the new covenant is now enthroned. Moses himself and the prophets testified that communion with God in light and peace, that spiritual life and strength could only come by grace, not through the works of the law, not out of man's unrenewed heart. The history of Israel abund-

* Modern Judaism (both rabbinical and rationalistic) is not able to account for the cessation of sacrifices and the Levitical dispensation. The former acknowledges that in the destruction of the temple and the present condition of Israel without high priest and offerings, divine judgment on the nation's sin is expressed: the idea of atonement through a vicarious sacrifice is not quite extinct, as appears in the rite of the cock performed on the eve of the day of atonement, though devoid of all Scriptural authority. Rationalistic Judaism has departed still further from the truth. Rejecting the idea of substitution and expiation in connection with sacrifices, it regards the present condition of Israel as a more spiritual development, misinterpreting the protests of David and the prophets against ■ mere external view of the ceremonial law. (Ps. xl. 7; Hos. vi. 6; Jer. vii. 21-23.) The old has indeed vanished; but according to the will of God, because the true light now shineth, because the substance has come in Christ.

antly showed that the law was not able to fill them with the knowledge and the love of God; for they remained a disobedient and idolatrous people, they understood not God's character and ways, and continued not in His precepts.* The purpose of electing grace can only be fulfilled in the gift of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost. The new covenant alone is the complete manifestation of God Himself. It alone is everlasting, because it alone is the fulfilment of God's eternal counsel, according to which divine love and power accomplish the whole work of His people's salvation.

Thus the apostle confirms and comforts his brethren, who were perplexed and tempted by the outward splendour of the temple, and the out-

* In reviewing the history of Israel before the exile, it is most melancholy to notice that the periods of obedience and godliness are comparatively few; they are rather exceptional brief glimpses of light than the normal condition of the chosen people. The forty years in the wilderness, the age under the Judges and the Kings, are on the whole periods of darkness. There was always a remnant according to the election of grace, the seven thousand, who had not bowed the knee unto Baal; but idolatry and heathenish abominations co-existed beside the true worship and the testimony of the prophets. The reign of David and Solomon is a bright exception. The law of Moses, with its stern denunciation of idolatry, with its loving and generous consideration of the poor and its requirements of liberality and devotedness, was rarely carried out, as is evident from the prophetic expostulations. Since the Babylonian exile Israel has not fallen into idolatry, but into an external and superficial view of the law, into dead formalism and self-righteousness. How true then, in the light of history, is the assertion of the prophet Jeremiah and of the apostle Paul, that Israel has not continued in the first covenant.

ward insignificance of the Christian assemblies. Theirs was the worship in spirit and in truth; they had received the better promises of the new covenant. For now they knew the will of God, not in the form of an outward commandment, but in the power of the indwelling Spirit; not engraven on tables of stone, but written on the renewed heart. Now the knowledge of God, a knowledge full of light and certainty, given directly by God Himself, was the privilege of each believer; they were a congregation of prophets and priests, to whom God revealed Himself, and who could draw near to Him in worship; and these unspeakable privileges are based upon the perfect and absolute forgiveness and remission of sin through the precious blood of Christ.

How great is the contrast between the old and the new covenant! In the one God demands of sinful man: "Thou shalt." In the other God promises: "I will." The one is conditional; the other is the manifestation of God's free grace, and of God's unlimited power. In the one the promise is neutralized by the disobedience of man; in the other all the promises of God are Yea in Christ, and Amen in Christ. In the new covenant Christ is all; He is the Alpha and Omega; all things are of God, and all things are sure and stedfast.

The blessings of the new covenant are all

based upon the forgiveness of sin. God promises to put His laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts, and to be to us a God, *because* He is merciful to our unrighteousness, and will remember our sins and iniquities no more. The forgiveness of sin is not merely the beginning, but it is the foundation, the source; it is, so to say, the mother of all divine blessings. For as long as sin is upon the conscience, and man is not able to draw near unto God, he is separated from the only source of life and blessedness. In the forgiveness of sin God gives Himself, and all things that pertain to life and godliness. Hence David, in enumerating the benefits God hath bestowed on him, commenced with this fundamental one, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Sin is removed, and we are brought nigh to God, and thus enter into the possession of all spiritual blessings. If we look at this most elementary and simple truth, the first which little children are taught,* we find it contains the germ of all truths. Hence all our progress in the divine life, and all the consolations of the Christian pilgrim, are rooted in this primary doctrine of forgiveness through faith in Jesus.

To know God is the sum and substance of all blessings, both in this life and in that which is to come. Now, although the law manifests to a certain

* 1 John ii. 12.

extent the holiness and truth, the justice and unchangeableness, the goodness and bounty of God, the law does not reveal God Himself, the depth of His sovereign and eternal love, the purpose which He purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world was laid. When in Christ we receive the forgiveness of sin, we behold God.

Here is also the source and the commencement, the root and strength of our love to God. "We love Him, because He first loved us." We love much, because much is forgiven unto us. We are now a kingdom of priests unto God, *because* Christ loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. When the doctrine of forgiveness in its fulness and freeness is scripturally set forth, it requires no supplemental cautions, restrictions, and additions; for it is the central truth from which all doctrines radiate. The new obedience, the spiritual worship,* the fight and victory of faith, the knowledge and fear and love of God, have their starting-point in the pardon of sin.

And this is the new covenant blessing. True, the servants of God always knew this blessing. Of the divine righteousness both the law and the prophets testify. David describeth this blessedness. The sacrifices typified, faith looked forward to the great atonement. But now that Christ has

* Compare Ps. cxxx. 4.: "With Thee is forgiveness of sin, that Thou mayest be worshipped."

come, and that He died once for all, we receive forgiveness in a full and perfect manner: there is no more remembrance of sins; no repetition of sacrifice is needed; no yearly recurrence of the day of atonement; in Christ we have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

How precious is this emphatic declaration, "Their sins and their transgressions will I remember no more." Our sins are removed and buried in the depths of the sea, and this according to divine holiness, justice, and truth. Here is the *righteousness of God*. "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."* Between God and us, there is now no longer sin; Jesus, and Jesus only, fills our view.

It is in giving this perfect pardon that God renews the heart, and writes in it His laws. We must needs contrast law and gospel. Yet let us not forget that the law from the very outset showed its temporary and negative character, pointed beyond and away from itself; sighed, as it were, after Him, who by fulfilling would take it away, and by taking it away would fulfil it in us, and in fulfilling it in us, raise us to the still greater height of the new love! Oh that My people had a heart to obey My commandment! was the language of God in the ancient days. I

* Rom. i. 16, 17.

will circumcise their hearts, was His promise. The law testified, that fallen man could not keep it; that written on tables of stone it only condemned, that it had no power to inscribe itself on the hard, unrenewed heart of man. The law commands love, and love never can come out of law. The fulfilment of the law presupposes life and spirit; and by the law dead souls can never be quickened. As the Apostle Paul fully explains in the Epistle to the Galatians, the Holy Ghost is received through the preaching of the gospel, the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins.

Now the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared, and teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The law of God is fulfilled in the believer, in the spiritual man, who trusts in Jèsus.

Of this renewal of the heart and gift of the Holy Ghost the prophet Ezekiel also testifies.* May we not say that the whole of the Old Testament points (both as a contrast and a preparation) to this: Jesus saves His people from their sins; for He comes with water and with blood and with the Spirit: He is Righteousness and Life.

All spiritual life flows from Jesus as our Saviour. When we believe in Jesus we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. His precious blood is not merely our peace, but our strength; and our strength

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

because it is our peace. Justification and sanctification emanate from this *One Source*.

When Israel is brought in repentance and faith to the Lord, then shall be fulfilled the gracious purpose of God, which under the law was frustrated through Israel's sin and disobedience. Although God was a Husband unto them, they brake His covenant. But now, forgiven and renewed, Israel will be in actual reality, and not merely in position, God's people, and Jehovah will be their God. This is the most exalted and comprehensive blessing which was ever promised. Jehovah is not ashamed to be called their God. He identifies Himself with His people. All His glorious perfections are revealed in His relation to them. In them is fulfilled the good pleasure of His will. And because He is God to them, Source of Light and Life, they are His people. Not merely chosen and appointed; not merely called and treated collectively as God's people; but in reality, according to truth, according to their individual character and experience, the people in whom God's name is revealed, who show forth His praise, who walk in His ways and obey His will. For of Him shall their fruit be found; God working in them both to will and to do, they shall abound in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of His grace.

For then each one individually shall know

the Lord. "God is known in Judah," said the Psalmist. God had indeed revealed Himself unto His people. He had taught them and given unto them His Word. In their marvellous history, in the divine messages sent by Moses and the prophets, in the types and ordinances, in the Judges and Kings, God had revealed unto His people His name, His character and will, and His great desire was that they should know Him. How touching is the complaint of Jehovah, that after all the signs which they had seen, and after all His mighty works of redeeming and guiding love, and after all the words of light and of grace which He had sent them, His people did *not know Him!* So long had He been with them, and erring in their hearts, they did not know His ways!* What could be more grievous to the fatherly heart of God, yearning to be known, trusted, and loved? What gives us a sadder picture of the fall of man, of the alienation of the human heart from God, of our utter incapacity to understand and to receive divine things, than the fact that Israel did not know the revealed God, who taught and blessed them constantly, abundantly, and with most tender compassion? But when the Holy Ghost shall be poured out upon them, they shall all know Jehovah, from the least to the greatest; though one shall encourage and exhort the other, yet

* Isa. i. ; Ps. xcv.

they shall not need to teach and to say to their neighbour, Know the Lord.

In the Church this promise is already fulfilled.* Although the apostle John distinguishes between little children, young men, and fathers, he writes unto the whole congregation of believers: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."† It is true that he sends unto them an epistle, rich in doctrine and exhortation, but, as he expresses it, in full harmony with our passage, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it." "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." "They shall be all taught of God." This promise, uttered by the prophet Isaiah,‡ is regarded by our Saviour as the promise uttered by all prophets;§ for it is the great Messianic blessing, the promise of the Father.

From Jesus, the Anointed, all Christians re-

* ■ And how do I know thee? I know thee in thee! I do not know thee as thou art in thyself, but as thou art to me, and that not without thee, but in thee, because thou art the light, which hath enlightened me. For what thou art to thyself is known only to thee; what thou art to me, according to thy grace, is known also unto me; I know, because thou art my God."—*Augustine's Soliloquia.*

† 1 John ii. 20. Compare the apostle Paul's words (1 Thess. iv. 9): "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Likewise 2 Peter i. 12.

‡ Isa. liv. 13.

§ John vi. 45, ἐν τοῖς προφήταις.

ceive the Holy Ghost; they have, according to their name, the unction from above. Hence they possess the Teacher who guides into all truth. Knowledge is within them. There is within them a well of living water. They are not dependent on external instruction. There is given unto them the Paraclete, who always reveals the things that are freely given unto us of God. The spiritual man knows all things—all the things of the Spirit, all that pertains to life and godliness. True, he does not know all things actually, or in any given moment; but he knows them potentially. There is within him the light which can see, the mind which can receive all truth. It is for this reason that apostles and teachers give instruction. They teach the God-taught; they present spirit-revealed realities to the spiritual. Human erudition, mental acuteness or profundity, are of no avail here. The youngest and most illiterate, the least gifted and most uncultivated, may possess the wisdom which is from above. And this knowledge, God-given, is full of assurance; it possesses the nature of light, of conviction, of absolute certainty. We know that our Redeemer liveth; we know whom we have believed; we know that we are born of God, and that all things work together for good unto them that love Him; we know the things that are freely given to us of God. Every Christian knows himself individually, and that because

he is taught of God ; he relies not on the testimony of man ; his faith stands in the power of God.

This personal knowledge of God is the secret of our spiritual life. It is our safeguard against error, and against sin. It is the great and the constant gift of God, the fruit of Christ's redemption. We now see and know God and His Son ; we know Jesus, because Jesus always knows His sheep, revealing Himself unto them, and giving them guidance and life. This knowledge is nothing less than walking with God, walking in the light, praying without ceasing. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. In much darkness, amid many difficulties, and in constant warfare we yet walk in the light of His countenance, until at last we shall see Him as He is, and know even as we are known.

How great is the blessedness of all who are in the new, the everlasting covenant ; in the covenant of grace and life, in which God Himself is revealed, and in which all things are of God. Here Christ is to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Our transgressions are pardoned, yea, there is no more remembrance of sin. The heart is renewed, and the Holy Ghost is given as an indwelling Spirit. God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are in constant and filial

communion with Him. He is our God, and we are His people; He is our Father, and we are His children. And all these blessings have their root and commencement, their vitality and permanence in the redemption, accomplished on Golgotha, they are dispensed from the heavenly sanctuary by *the Mediator*, who was the Paschal Lamb on the cross. Little children and fathers, young converts and experienced Christians, *always* hear the voice of Jesus: *This is the New Testament* IN MY BLOOD.

Hallelujah! I believe!
Now no longer on my soul
All the debt of sin is lying;
One great Friend has paid the whole.
Icebound fields of legal labour
I have left with all their toil;
While the fruits of love are growing
From a new and genial soil.

CHAPTER XXI.

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH.

HEBREWS ix. 1-5.

(Introductory Remarks.)

THE nature of spiritual worship, even after it has been revealed in Scripture, is very rarely understood.

Apart from revelation, we do not find anywhere traces of spiritual worship. "Think of the religions of antiquity. Where do we seek and find the sanctuary of true, deep, manifold, and eloquent prayer? where the language and grammar, where the scale of all notes of supplication, typical for all humanity and all the ages? where, except in the assemblies of the worshippers of Jehovah, in the courts of that service which knew no image of the Unseen, in that temple where God, in His sublime, spiritual presence and reality, transcends all human thought, who for centuries since, and through all coming ages, fills and guides the hearts of all believers."* Only Israel and the

* Nitzsch.

Church possess the knowledge of God; the most cultivated and learned nations were not able to rise to a pure, spiritual, and exalted conception of divinity. And the spirituality, as well as the exclusiveness of true worship, Jewish and Christian, have at first a repulsive effect on the natural man. The Greeks and Romans were not merely astonished at, but felt irritated by the worship of Christians, who without image and altar, without priests and vestments, appeared to them to be *ἄθεοι*, men without gods, influenced by what they deemed a strange superstition, the mysterious power of which they could not comprehend, when they saw how it enabled Christians to rejoice in suffering, and to meet with calm courage and hopefulness the tortures of death. It was enigmatic, and the absence of all visible symbol, of all idols and altars, still more bewildered them. When they beheld how faith in the unseen Lord was a real and mighty power in the hearts and lives of men and women, filling them with earnestness, zeal, hope, and joy, how it lifted them above the sinful pleasures of the world, the love of money, the fever of ambition, the frivolity and emptiness of a selfish life, how it enabled them to bear calmly and patiently the trials, and sufferings, and persecutions which they had to endure, and to face the cruel and excruciating death to which they were condemned, not merely with

equanimity, but with the fortitude of heroes, and the radiant joy of virgins going forth to meet the Bridegroom—their astonishment was boundless. They called it a mania, a demoniac possession, a mysterious moral epidemic, which had broken out and threatened to undermine the commonwealth. Of truth, of a real, living, and loving God, they knew nothing. They felt annoyed, that the small and insignificant Jewish nation would not adopt their gods and customs, would keep aloof from their temples, feasts, and banquets. It is narrated, that when Pompey had conquered Jerusalem, and without reverence penetrated into the interior of the temple, he proceeded into the holy of holies. There, a feeling of awe seized him, and he left all things untouched. Since that time, the Roman author says, it is known that the Jews worship something empty and vague, that cannot be seen. While the Greeks, proud of their culture and intelligence, looked down in contempt upon all other nations, and also upon Israel, the Romans, proud of their power, judged of the gods of nations by the amount of victories achieved under their protection. You may know, remarks Cicero, what is the power of the Jews and their God, by the circumstance that their land has been subjugated and divided.

Having no knowledge of objective truth, regarding all religions as equally legitimate ex-

pressions of national traditions, sentiments, and modes of thought, they were quite willing to worship, in whatever country they happened to be, according to the prevailing usage. To add Christ also to the number of their gods and heroes would have been quite in accordance with their thought. Hence they could not understand the nature of that faith and worship which had for its object the true and living, the only God, and which could not be added to or mingled with any other faith and worship. Israel and the Church claim to possess the truth, to know, love, and serve the only true and living God. Therefore they must be hated by all who do not submit themselves to the heavenly revelation. Philosophers of every age, both before and since the advent, can tolerate every system of moral and spiritual thought and worship. They can find something good, noble, and elevating in every religion; but they cannot tolerate the one only God-revealed truth in Christ Jesus.* The adoption of the Christian name and of Christian terminology is very superficial. Only a short

* Man delights in the activity of his mental faculties, in fearless and free speculation, making his own mind the idol, even in inquiring after God and His service. Lessing said, "Did the Almighty, holding in His right hand truth, and in His left search after truth, deign to proffer me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation, I could request search after truth." This is the very opposite spirit of the Jewish and Christian. *God hath spoken.* (Heb. i. 1-3.)

time may be required to complete that process of development, or rather chemical separation, which is at present dividing true spiritual Christians, who believe God's word, and the world, who reject the counsel of God, in His incarnate Son and His cross. And again it will be seen, that of a truth against God's holy child Jesus, Pontius Pilate and the heathen and unbelieving Jews have risen, denying God and His Anointed; for Christ is against the world, and the world against Christ. Modern Paganism (often using Christian terminology) only conceals this fact. Jesus claims to be the truth, absolute, exhaustive, ultimate; He claims to be, not one of many ways, not the best of all ways, but the way—the only, exclusive, divine way of access unto the light, love, and life of God. If He was not exclusive, He would be like the others, only giving guesses at truth, and not its revelation; He cannot but assert His absolute and exclusive Mediatorship. It is this exclusiveness of Jesus (like the absolute and jealous denunciation of Jehovah against all idolatry) which is met by the bitter, though often latent and unconscious, enmity of the world. He that is not for Jesus is against Him. All they that attempt, without Him, to enter into the fold are thieves and robbers. Jesus is the truth, and in Him alone we draw near to the Father.

Apart from Revelation, men have not the idea of God as Lord, Spirit, Father. And even after the light of Scripture has appeared, God is to many only an abstract word, by which they designate a complex of perfections, rather than a real living, loving, ever-present Lord, to whom we speak and of whom we ask the blessings we need. How different from this vague life and colourless abstraction, without will and love, this incomprehensible All and Nothing is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him we can pray. Without revelation prayer is regarded not so much as asking God in order to receive from Him, but as an exercise of mind which elevates, ennobles, and comforts. It is a monologue. Worship is viewed as a representation of our ideas of divine attributes and perfections, not the recognition of God, as through revelation we know Him in His relation to us.

See how God reveals to the poor sin-convinced soul—to the humblest, the most ignorant, the most guilty—what the wise and righteous of the world can neither discover nor attain. A sinful, thoughtless, frivolous woman, living in the darkness of an ungodly life, and belonging to a race possessing only dim and imperfect knowledge of divine truth, had been drawn into conversation by a mysterious stranger, who beginning with the lowly

request of a favour had brought before her in words (whose meaning she scarcely comprehended, but which roused deep longings within her soul), the misery and emptiness of the world, the existence and blessedness of a higher spiritual and divine life; and He who at first spoke as a weary traveller had gradually presented Himself as the mysterious Mediator and Dispenser of a divine and transcendent gift. But the heart and the conscience, the deepest centre of her being, had not been touched yet. Jesus then reveals Himself as the Searcher of Hearts, the Lord and Judge, who knoweth secret things. He brings before her the guilty past. The arrow is sent forth by a strong yet gentle hand; its purpose is to wound and to heal. The woman exclaims: I perceive thou art a prophet; that is, a seer, a messenger of God, one entrusted with a divine message. Brought thus unto the presence of God, realizing God, as only the sin-convinced conscience and heart do, she immediately wishes to please, worship, serve that Supreme Lord.

The question she now addresses to the Saviour is not a skilful evasion of a painful and humiliating subject; it proceeds from the depths of a wounded heart; it is the question of repentance and profound desire after God. If God *is* He must be worshipped. Hitherto theological disputes had no interest for her, but now she thirsts

after God, the living God, and longs to come unto Him in true worship.

It was to this poor and sinful Samaritan woman that Jesus explained, in that solemn, lonely hour, the profound truths of spiritual worship. He reminds her, first of all, that the question of worship is not to be decided by man, but by God. Human thought, sentiment, traditions, cannot have authority in this highest and most sacred matter. The Samaritans, as all other nations left to themselves, have no knowledge of worship, because they know not God. True worship can only be found on the territory of revelation. In Israel God had revealed Himself, and His revelation of Himself was as the God of salvation. Because salvation is of the Jews, with them also was found true worship. True, it was for a long time under a limited, preparatory, symbolical dispensation, but at the same time real and spiritual, and the germ of the universal and free worship which has been brought in through the fulfilment in Christ Jesus.

Spirituality is not an inherent subjective quality, it is the reflection of the person worshipped ; as the God so the worshipper. The words of the Saviour, "Ye worship ye know not what," have a far more extensive application than to Samaritans. The most cultivated and refined men cannot, by their reason, intuition, or learning, find God ; and their

conception of the supreme, ethereal and ideal as it may be, is not spiritual but carnal. But Israel knew Jehovah as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; as the God who had appeared unto their fathers with condescending, familiar, loving favour, guiding and comforting, blessing and helping, the God who had chosen them, and who had redeemed them out of Egypt to be His peculiar people, and to show forth His praise. They were called to the knowledge and service of God, that through them light and salvation should be brought to all Gentiles, even to the uttermost ends of the earth. And we await still the fulfillment of the immutable promises connected with the Abrahamic covenant when, from Israel as a centre, the light of God's salvation shall shine forth unto all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The dispensation of the law came in as an intermediate and preparatory one. One great object was to show forth by types the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and the character of true worship. There are only two chapters of Scripture to narrate the creation of the world; but no fewer than sixteen chapters of the inspired record are devoted to the description of the tabernacle. It has been remarked, that God took only six days in the work of creation, but spent forty days with Moses in directing him to make the tabernacle.

The work of grace is more glorious than the work of creation. Three times the book of Exodus gives a full account of all the parts of the tabernacle. First, when the command is given to build it; then again, when its preparation is narrated; and a third time, after it was actually erected. For the tabernacle shows forth the redemption in Christ; and the whole world was created that the glory of God should be manifested in Christ and the Church. And Scripture, by thus attaching a far greater importance to the description of the tabernacle than to the narrative of the world's creation, teaches us to contemplate the things that are unseen, to fix our thoughts and affections on the eternal and heavenly world, to lift our eyes to those heights whence descend the light and love of our blessed God.

Scripture teaches us that the tabernacle was built according to the divine revelation given unto Moses. It was according to the pattern of heavenly things beheld by him on the mount. The idea of the structure in its grand outlines, as well as the arrangements of the detail, were not of human origin. They are not to be traced to the ingenuity of Moses, or to the model of heathen sanctuaries. All things were of God, everywhere the Holy Ghost did symbolize. The tabernacle was to the believing Israelite full of symbols, showing the grace of their Redeemer God, and shadowing

forth the manifold mercy of God, who forgives and sanctifies His people, who brings them into His presence, bestows upon them His blessing, and enables them to worship and serve Him with thankful and rejoicing hearts. And to us who read these chapters in the light of fulfillment, they are full of gospel instruction and comfort; unfolding the varied treasures of grace, the many aspects of Christ and His work, and of the experience of His saints.*

The people offered with exceeding liberality and willingness of heart all the material needed for the building, and the skill and genius of enlightened workmen prepared the various portions of the structure and the vessels. Thus according to the condescending wisdom and goodness of God, the affections and energies of His people were enlisted, and they were workers together with Him of whom and by whom are all things.

* We find here, to use Owen's words, such an evidence of divine wisdom and goodness, as gives them beauty, desirableness, and usefulness, unto their proper end. There is that in them, which unto an enlightened mind will distinguish them for ever from the most plausible inventions of men, advanced in the imitation of them. Only a diligent inquiry into them is expected from us. (Ps. cxi. 2, 3.) When men have slight considerations of any of God's institutions, when they come unto them without a sense that there is divine wisdom in them, that which becomes him from whom they are, it is no wonder if their glory be hid from them. But when we diligently and humbly inquire into any of the ways of God, to find out the characters of His divine excellencies that are upon them, we shall obtain a satisfying view of His glory. (Hosea vi. 3.)

When afterwards the temple was built, and the tabernacle of the wilderness was changed into a permanent and stationary house on mount Zion, the palace of the great King, whose chosen city is Jerusalem, the affection and reverence of the nation clung to it with great intensity. From the very excess of superstition and formalism into which this feeling degenerated, we can infer its original strength. And indeed, though we find in David and Solomon the most spiritual and elevated conceptions of the divine omnipresence, and of the true nature of prayer and sacrifice; though in all the prophetic writings we meet with constant warnings against a merely outward service, and a constant reference to inward purity and to the adoration and obedience of the heart, yet the temple, where God revealed His presence and His glory, where His beautiful ordinances were observed, and the most solemn transactions took place between Jehovah and His people through the appointed mediation of priests and high priest, was necessarily most sacred and endeared to every true Israelite. How touching is the description in the book of Ezra of the laying of the foundation at the rebuilding of the temple: "But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and

many shouted aloud for joy : so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people : for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off."

The position of Israel at the time of our Lord was one of great solemnity. It was the most solemn crisis in Israel's history. The Lord whom they sought (some really, and others only in profession) came suddenly to His temple. Jesus came as a minister of the circumcision to fulfill the promises made unto the fathers. He came first as a prophet, preaching repentance ; for the kingdom of God was at hand. He came to gather them. He was the last as well as the greatest messenger sent unto Jerusalem. But they did not reverence the Son. They understood not the time of their visitation. Jesus with tears predicted judgment on the beloved city, the city of the great King. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another : because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." And of the temple He said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down'

But between the announcement and the execution of the judgment forty years intervened. The Lord is slow to anger; He is long-suffering, and gracious. He delays judgment to gather in a remnant, and to show to the whole world the righteousness and the mercifulness of all His dealings. How important and solemn, how wide-reaching in their influence, are these forty years of the patience of God, of the further probation of Israel! Israel had hated Jesus "without cause," and with cruel hands nailed Him to the accursed tree; yet Jesus on the cross prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Israel had committed the great and culminating sin; they had rejected the Lord of glory, the Son of the Most High, yet God hath not cast away His people. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance, and the everlasting covenant shall yet be made with them, when everlasting joy and glory shall be given unto the children of Abraham. And as a pledge of this ultimate favour, in answer to the prayer of the dying Saviour, and through the preaching of the apostle Peter, three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and many thousands (tens of thousands) were added unto the number of disciples. The apostle Peter preached to the men of Israel. He addressed the whole nation, delivering unto them as a nation the message that God had sent

Jesus unto them first. He called upon them to turn unto the Lord, in order that the fulness of divine blessing might come upon them according to the promise. In the same patriotic spirit as the prophets, with the most tender regard for the national privileges and customs, the apostles addressed themselves unto the nation, preaching the first and second advent of Israel's Messiah and King. The apostle of the Gentiles also came as a Jew to the Jews, as under the law to those who were under the law, and in all his addresses to his people breathes the same fervent national consciousness; he declared the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers.

But, alas! the nation resisted the counsel of God, and took no heed to the voice of the Holy Ghost, speaking to them with such clearness and love through the apostles. They counted themselves unworthy of eternal life. God, in the abundance of His love and wisdom, made Israel's unbelief the occasion of sending the gospel to the Gentiles. Still the period of mercy to Israel was prolonged. The testimony was still sent to them. The doctrine of the Church, as the body, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, was now fully revealed; the apostle Peter, who opened the door to the Gentiles in the baptism of Cornelius, and the apostle Paul, who was specially led to the uncircumcision; the Council of Jerusalem, with

reference to the relation of the Gentiles to the law of Moses; and finally, the full and explicit teaching of the Pauline Epistles;—all this unveiled what had been hitherto hid, the intermediate position of the Church, when Israel as a nation was to be set aside. From the very commencement, in the parables and warnings of the Saviour, in the experience of Peter and John after Pentecost, in the first persecution of the saints, in the martyrdom of Stephen, in the opposition against the apostle Paul, the dark clouds were gathering, and the wrath to the uttermost was approaching.

Meanwhile, it was most difficult for many Jewish Christians to understand the true character of the transition period, and to enter into the spirit of the new era, which in reality had already commenced, though not actually and formally. If it is difficult at present for the Church to remember that they have not taken the place of Israel, if, as the apostle anticipated, the Church in many ages has become ignorant of the “mystery,” that all Israel shall be saved, that Jesus shall reign as king over His chosen people, when all the blessings promised to Abraham and through all the prophets will be fulfilled, can we wonder that the Hebrews could not readily understand the character of the Church dispensation, while they were still, and with apostolic sanction, observing the law of Moses?

We learn from the book of Acts, and this very epistle, how much the believing Jews suffered from their countrymen. Their goods were confiscated; they had to suffer imprisonment; some were put to death; they were banished from what was most sacred and precious to them. Israel, as a nation, would not submit to the righteousness of God. They became obdurate in self-conceit, self-righteousness, and formalism. They rested with a false security in their mechanical obedience of legal enactments, and in the possession of the temple services. They were without fear, while the terrible judgment was approaching. Destruction came suddenly, unexpectedly. Even to the last moment the inhabitants of Jerusalem expected divine deliverance. They had not heard the loving voice of Him who said, "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me;" they understood not the fearful words which they had uttered, when they cried: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children."

This is, indeed, *the* tragedy of history. It is most melancholy to notice the enthusiasm, the intense and tenacious trust, which moved them to resist the invincible might of Rome. They could not believe that God would give up His beloved city, and the place of His sanctuary. They hoped and trusted against all hope. But the hour of God's righteous judgment had come. Jerusalem

was destroyed; their house was left unto them desolate.*

Extremely solemn and awful is this catastrophe as the end of centuries of the most marvellous revelations and dealings of divine love, wisdom, and power. God, who revealed His truth by His Spirit to His chosen saints among Jews and Gentiles, has manifested to the whole world His counsel by the solemn judgment which descended on Jerusalem. Amid all the vicissitudes and struggles of the covenant-people, the sanctuary and the Levitical service continued; only once it had been interrupted during the Babylonian captivity. During the centuries that Israel had to live under the Roman yoke, though no

* The character of Roman conquest and rule is most graphically symbolized in the prophetic vision (Dan. ii.) "Strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things." The Greco-Macedonian monarchy was characterized by the presence of poetical and ideal conceptions; but in Rome we see an embodiment of force. State policy, and the cold haughtiness of violence and power, must have been very hard to bear. No wonder Tacitus speaks of the hostile hatred (hostile odium) of the Jews against the Romans, who regarded them with great indignation and contempt, because the Jewish God could not be conquered as the other gods. This small nation would not yield to Roman idolatry. In the whole of Asia, as Caligula complained, there was not a single temple, a single city or province of the empire, which had refused to admit his statue, and to honour him as a divinity, except in Judæa. The last struggles of Jerusalem show a most extraordinary strength and energy. Never was conflict so unequal, as the Emperor Titus points out to the two captive leaders of the Jews (according to Josephus, whose want of patriotism and Jewish spirit is very melancholy), when neither the Germans, so renowned for their physical

Son of David sat upon the throne, the temple stood in glory, and Israel rejoiced in the beauty of its stones and in the splendour of its services. But since the rejection of Jesus, no human power has been able to restore this visible sanctuary and the sacrifices and priestly ordinances. God had spoken to His people by the voice of apostles. At last He spoke by the voice of Judgment. The destruction of the temple and the removal of the whole Levitical dispensation teaches, by actual historical demonstration, truth which the epistles set forth doctrinally. It is an anachronism to speak now of priests in the sense of sacerdotal mediators. It is an anachronism to speak of symbolic worship, of ordinances, which are figures and shadows of spiritual realities. The Levitical dis-

vigour, nor Britannia, guarded by the ocean, nor Carthage, with all its courage, and with all the skill of its generals, could successfully resist the power of Rome. He did not know of their trust in Jehovah, and in His word, which, notwithstanding their grievous apostacy, and amidst fearful perversions and fanatic zeal, still lodged in their hearts. Hence their unparalleled sufferings, and the agonizing grief with which the destruction of the beloved city and the temple filled their hearts, could not extinguish the hope of a future restoration and glory. Rabbi Akiba was walking with some friends about Jerusalem. They saw nothing but *débris*, and caves of wild beasts. A fox was bounding past them. The friends of Akiba are grieved; he himself laughs. How can you laugh when unclean animals inhabit the sacred soil! This is why I laugh; as sure as the word is fulfilled, uttered by Jeremiah (xxvi. 18): "Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest," that which was spoken of by the prophet Zechariah will also come to pass.

pensation was given only to Israel, and to Israel only, for a certain period of their history. Since the destruction of Jerusalem, Israel is without high priest, without sacrifice, without temple. God Himself has removed the shadow, because the substance is come. God Himself has by severe judgment taken away the earthly, elementary, and fragmentary, that Israel may turn to the heavenly, eternal, and perfect.

But unto the Gentiles God *never* gave an Aaronic priesthood, an earthly tabernacle, a symbolical service. From the very commencement He taught them, as Jesus taught the woman of Samaria, that now all places are alike sacred, that the element in which God is worshipped is spirit and truth, that believers are children who call

Zech. viii. 4: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age." The destruction of Jerusalem is not like the fall of Troy, of Babylon, of Carthage. Even while the divine judgment is on Israel, and Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles, the Scripture entrusted to their guardianship, and the gospel which first was preached among them, goes forth among all nations, gaining the affection and prayers of multitudes for their conversion and restoration, while under the special care of God they are preserved until the appointed time of her favour is come, and God shall visit and rebuild her in great mercy. But the judgment is yet awaiting Rome, who passed unrighteous sentence against that Just and Holy One, and delivered Him up to be crucified, who destroyed the holy city, and scattered the chosen people, who for many centuries shed the blood of the martyrs, and who is still the centre of the most God-dishonouring perversion of His truth.

upon the Father, that they are a royal priesthood, who through Jesus are brought nigh unto God, who enter into the holy of holies which is above.*

As the apostle says so frequently to the Hebrews, "We have," we do possess the reality and substance of those things of which the unbelieving Jews boast, so may we say in these days of priestly pretension and false views of the Christian ministry and worship, We *have*, blessed be God, the true sanctuary, the new and consecrated way into the

* While the temple stood, Jesus and the apostles honoured the temple. The Lord said unto the leper, "Show thyself unto the priest." He and His apostles went daily into the temple. After His resurrection, and while the gospel was being preached unto Israel, the temple services and ordinances may have been blessed to souls, as images and prophecies of the heavenly realities. But any imitation of the Levitical dispensation in the present day **must** needs be contrary to God's mind, and obscure the clear revelation in Christ Jesus. The expression "priest," in the sense of *lepeús*, applied to a Christian minister, can in no wise be defended. The expression "consecration," as applied to buildings, ought also to be given up, and with the expression every remnant of the old leaven, which attaches some kind of "sanctity" to any place. Sacred places there are none now. We never read of the apostolic Christians going to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, or to Golgotha, where He died, or to the garden, where He rose, or to the mount of Olives, where He ascended, or to the temple-chamber, in which the Pentecostal gift was received. "Where two or three are gathered together," there, *because*, and *when* they are gathered together in the name of Jesus; wherever we worship in spirit and truth, *there* and *then* we may say, How dreadful is this place! This view does not in the least affect the necessity and the desirability of having spacious, suitable, and attractive buildings set apart for the meetings of God's people and the preaching of the gospel. Here is a proper field for Christian liberality and also for architectural skill.

holy of holies, we have access by one Spirit through the blood of Jesus unto the Father. We *have* the real presence, even Jesus, dwelling in our hearts by faith; Jesus, where two or three are gathered in His name; Jesus making Himself known in the breaking of bread; Jesus speaking by the Holy Ghost through the Word read and preached. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there it is not merely as if He was in the midst of them, but He Himself is with them in truth and reality, in Spirit and in power, in love and in blessing. If any man love Him, the Father and the Son will come and take up their abode with him. Jesus is our Immanuel in the heart, in the assembly, in the world. We have Christ, and in Him we have all.

How difficult is it to rise from the spirit of Paganism to the clear and bright atmosphere of the gospel! How much inclined are men to welcome everything which does not reveal to them their true condition, and bring them into the very presence of God. Priesthood, vestments, consecrated buildings, symbols, and observances—all place Christ at a great distance, and cover the true, sinful, and guilty state of the heart which has not been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Look again at the woman of Samaria. Ignorant, guilty, degraded as she was, Jesus brought her at once into the presence of the living, loving

Redeemer-God. He revealed unto her the fulness of divine love. He revealed Himself as the giver of the living water. As a free gift He declared to her salvation. The sinner believes, and as a child He is brought by Jesus unto the Father. High above all space, high above all created heavens, before the very throne of God, is the sanctuary in which we worship. Jesus presents us to the Father. We are beloved children, clothed with white robes, the garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness, we are priests unto God.

There is one expression in the teaching on worship, which the Lord gave unto the woman of Samaria, which in its simplicity and height exceeds the teaching of our epistle. Jesus said, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." The doctrine of adoption or sonship is rather implied* than developed in this epistle. In it God is never called our Father,† or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our epistle rather prepares for the higher and yet simpler view, which presents to us God as our Father in Christ Jesus, and believers as His adopted and beloved children. In this

* Heb. ii. 11.

† Hebrews xii. 9 is no exception. Only one who fully saw the doctrine of adoption could have written this epistle; for although from the aim and scope of the epistle it does not move, as it were, in this highest plane, yet is all the teaching harmonious with the full New Testament doctrine.

present dispensation the *Father* seeketh worshippers, and it is in *children* that He seeketh worshippers. Now we understand the full meaning of Christ's blessed and sweet word: After this manner shall ye pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" for the Holy Ghost, whom the ascended Saviour hath sent into our hearts, teaches and enables us to cry, in the Spirit of adoption, Abba!

The shadow has vanished; unto us the true light shineth; but Israel is still in darkness, and the world without the knowledge of God. But the day is approaching when Israel shall seek the Lord and their King David; when the idols shall be utterly abolished, and the Lord alone be exalted. Meanwhile, let us, who are gathered out of the world, and who invoke the Name of the revealed Lord, worship in Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh, but rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FIRST TABERNACLE.

HEBREWS ix. 1-5.

THE apostle had shown (viii. 13) that the old covenant was ready to vanish away; yet he is anxious to show that it was given of God, and for the appointed time full of blessing and instruction. It also possessed ordinances of divine service; that is, the divine service connected with it was given of God, instituted and sanctioned as a law among Israel. But the sanctuary was "worldly," that is, visible and tangible, according to this present world, and built with materials belonging to this earthly creation.*

* The force of *δικαιώματα* is, like the Hebrew judgments, ordinances, statutes in Deuteronomy. The service was *jure divino*.

The antithesis to worldly (*κοσμικόν*) is heavenly, uncreated, eternal. Thus in the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle, speaking of the legal parenthetical dispensation, says we were then in bondage under the elements of the world; and in the epistle to the Colossians, he contrasts with the rudiments of the world the heavenly position of the believer who has died with Christ, and "is no longer living in the world" (Gal. iv. 2, Col. ii. 20), but seeking the things above. Of the temporary character of the Jewish service, we have very striking indications in the prophets. Thus we read in the prophet Jeremiah (iii. 16): "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord,

But now we worship in the heavenly sanctuary. By the destruction of the Temple, God declared unto the whole world, in the solemn language of judgment, what He had before revealed by His Spirit to His saints. They knew the mystery of the church : that during the times of the Gentiles, while Israel, on account of unbelief, is set aside as the theocratic and central nation, God gathers to Christ a people from among Jews and Gentiles, who, united in one body by one Spirit, and through the mediation of the High Priest, have access unto the Father. They possess the substance, the body, the fulness of which Israel had shadows, pictures, and manifold and imperfect emblems. Through the death of Christ, and by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the new covenant saints have entered into the true worship of sons. Jesus is the perfect mediator ; He perfectly accomplishes mediation ; He brings us nigh

they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord : neither shall it come to mind : neither shall they remember it ; neither shall they visit it ; neither shall that be done any more." It was already noticed by ancient Jews, that the sacrifices, described by Ezekiel in connection with the new temple in Jerusalem, are different from those ordained by Moses. The cleansing of the sanctuary at the commencement of the year, is substituted for the atonement at the end of seven months. "The defective and imperfect form of the old law gives place to a higher and more complete order."—*Hävernich*. Everything is simplified ; the passover and the feast of tabernacles are the two characteristic festivals of the new condition ; redemption and the rest and enjoyment of harvest.

unto God by His Blood, He brings God nigh unto us by His Spirit.

There is no room in the Church-dispensation for anything like the Levitical priesthood and symbolism. We who believe in Jesus, who honour the adorable Lord as the one Mediator between God and man, regard with profound sorrow, dismay, and abhorrence the antichristian attempt to introduce priestly mediation between Christ and His people. Christ is the only Prophet, and of Him, and none else, the Father says to us, "Hear ye Him." Christ is the only High Priest; and because He is on the throne of God, we are to come boldly, even out of the depth of our sin and weakness; we ascend above angels and principalities into the highest heaven, and find there help in time of need. Jesus is King, and has all power in heaven and on earth; and by the Holy Ghost He energises in every saint who cleaves to Him. It is true, that in the old dispensation there were symbols. They were not man-invented, but God-given, they descended from heaven; they derived their authority from God; they originated in the divine mind; they were framed by Him, who seeth the end from the beginning, and who in the most elementary and partial revelation has regard to the harmony and organic unity of the whole. Again, these symbols were to teach, to signify, to illustrate spiritual truths.

The divine word, the teaching of the prophets, and the very instinct of the godly, continually pointed away from the symbol to the reality, to the heavenly sanctuary, to the worship of the broken and the contrite heart. And last of all, they were known to be temporary, the star and moonlight to guide and cheer the faithful who waited for the sunrise, the promised redemption. What has Israel's symbolism—God-given, inspired, spiritual, heart-searching, and Christ-unfolding—to do with the inventions and institutions of men, substituted for the Word of God, and placed, not to illustrate, but to obscure the truth as it is in Jesus? Has the Church of Rome been, like the law, a schoolmaster to lead men unto Christ, to deepen the knowledge of sin, to exalt the holiness of God, to magnify His boundless grace, to point to the Lamb of God, and to the one perfect and all-sufficient Sacrifice?

What a marvellous confusion of Jewish, Pagan, and Christian elements do we see here! Jewish things which have waxed old, and vanished away; preparatory and imperfect elements which the apostle does not scruple to call beggarly now that the fulness has come—revived without divine authority, and changed and perverted to suit circumstances for which they were never intended. Pagan things, appealing to the deep-seated and time-confirmed love of idolatry, and of sensuous

and mere outward performances; the Babylonian worship of the Queen of Heaven; the intercession of saints and angels, the mechanical repetition of formulas, the superstitious regard of places, seasons, and relics. Buried among these elements are some relics of Christian truth, without which this ingenious fabric could not have existed so long, and influenced so many minds—a truth which in the merciful condescension of God is blessed to sustain the life of His chosen ones in the mystical Babylon. This so-called Church, vast and imposing, opens its door wide, except to those who honour the Scriptures, and who magnify the Lord Jesus. It can forgive sins, and grant pardons and indulgences, extending the astounding assumption of jurisdiction even beyond the grave; yet it cannot bring peace to the wounded conscience, and renewal to the aching heart, because it never fully and simply declares the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, by which we obtain perfect remission, and the power of the Holy Ghost, who joins us to Christ. This community speaks of sacrifice, of altars, of priesthood, and stands between the people and the sanctuary above, the only High Priest, who by His sacrifice has entered for us into the holy of holies. And in our day this great apostasy has reached a point which we would fain regard as its culminating point, when it places the Virgin Mary

by the side of the Lord Jesus as sinless and pure, and when it arrogates for man infallible authority over the heritage of God.

But I have referred to this great perversion of truth, to this apostasy, which exerts such a potent fascination, in order to remind you by contrast of the simplicity of the Gospel.*

They who believe in Jesus are, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, the people who are God's peculiar portion; all whom Jesus loves, and whom He has washed from their sins in His own blood, are made by Him kings and priests unto God and His Father. So we are taught by the apostles Peter and John.† And in our epistle we are reminded of the heavenly calling and the spiritual worship of all believers who consider with believing and simple hearts the great Apostle and High Priest of their profession.

God prepared the present dispensation of reality and substance by one of types and shadows.

Among the high and august privileges of Israel

* The true character of the Church of Rome was well described by Martin Luther in these forcible words: "The Church of Rome is built not upon the rock of the divine word, but on the sand of human reasoning." It is a rationalistic church. The only method to fortify young minds against Rome's fascinating errors, is to instruct them fully in the truths of God's word. The blood of atonement and the indwelling Spirit are the two great and precious gifts by which we obtain perfect peace, and knowing these two truths we shall not look for an outward infallible authority.

† 1 Pet. ii. 5-9; Rev. i. 5, 6.

which the apostle Paul enumerates in his epistle to the Romans, and which culminate in the transcendent fact, which is also their root, "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is God over all," he mentions also the service, including in this expression all the divine institutions concerning worship which were given unto the people through Moses. The people whom God had chosen and redeemed were separated to be a holy nation, to draw near unto Jehovah, and to worship Him. This was the great purpose of election and redemption. Hence the God-appointed service is as important as "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law." The word service is apt to convey an erroneous impression, because in the nominal church the character of spiritual worship has been so frequently and during protracted periods misunderstood. The service which God appointed in Israel must not be compared with ritual imposed by human authority, and arranged according to man's ingenuity or æsthetic feeling. In the tabernacle, which Moses built according to the pattern of heavenly things, shown unto him of God, everything, down to the minutest detail of number and colour, was of divine authority, and full of meaning. The Holy Ghost Himself teaches here by signs. When the apostle, after enumerating the vessels of the sanctuary, adds

that he cannot now speak of them particularly,* he thereby establishes, or rather confirms, the truth, well known to the Hebrews, that everything in the tabernacle was of divine appointment, and was symbolic of spiritual realities.

If we understand the nature of worship, we also see that the method of worship must be given and appointed of God. Man neither knows *whom* or *how* to worship. Even the chosen and redeemed people need to be taught how to worship; and herein is only a fuller revelation of the character of God Himself. Genesis is the fundamental book, the book of election; Exodus is the book of redemption; Leviticus the book of worship. The inference which the Puritan Divines drew from the second commandment—"Thou shalt not make to thyself any image;" viz., that it prohibited all methods and ceremonies in the worship of God invented and appointed by man, was not merely perfectly correct, but touched the very vital and sensitive point to which the superstition of centuries had become dead and obtuse.

* This expression plainly indicates, that although the apostle hastens to the consideration of the most important and central truth of which he is treating here, he could enter into a minute exposition of the various parts of the tabernacle. Hence the endeavour to find the typical meaning of those portions of the tabernacle which are not explained in the New Testament is perfectly legitimate, even as there are many more types and Messianic passages than those referred to and expounded by evangelists and apostles.

God taught Israel worship. The fulfilment of the types is in Christ; and now there is no other worship but worship of the forgiven and renewed believers, who through the great High Priest are before God, and know and love Him as Father.

Let us consider now the earthly tabernacle, as we are here reminded of it. The saints of old, whose souls thirsted for the living God, who could find no happiness and rest in the things of time and sense, whose hearts could not be filled with mere form, found in the ordinances of God's house their greatest delight. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord God of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." And in still stronger words: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." And we, who live in the bright light of the gospel, shall also find it good to be here, and to contemplate the divinely-appointed images of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places. "The Holy Ghost explains to us in the New Testament the highest mysteries of eternal redemption by words which are taken from these types, and says to us, 'Know the Lord,' by unfolding to us the Person, the Sacrifice, the High Priesthood of Christ, pre-

figured more profoundly and completely by the types than in the prophecies, properly so called."*

"Types were institutions intended to deepen, expand, and ennoble the circle of thoughts and desires, and thus heighten the moral and spiritual wants, as well as the intelligence and susceptibility of the chosen people."† Tyndal says: "These similitudes open Christ, and the secrets of God hid in Christ, and have more virtue and power with them than bare words, and lead a man's understanding further into the pith and marrow and spiritual understanding of the thing than all the words that can be imagined."

The apostle does not give a full description of the tabernacle. He makes no mention of the outer court, of the brazen altar, of the golden altar of incense, and other important parts. He hastens to point out that the way into the holiest was not then made manifest. His object is not to explain the meaning of the tabernacle, but to show how the tabernacle itself pointed beyond the earthly and temporary symbol.

God reveals Himself unto Israel as holy. Holiness, according to the Old Testament, is not so much one of the divine attributes, such as goodness, power, grace; but rather means the unity of

* Stier.

† From Dr. A. Bonar's excellent introduction on the nature of the book, *Comment. on Leviticus*.

all divine attributes, the very nature of God in His covenant relation to Israel. We bless His holy name, and mean thereby His forgiving grace, His healing mercy, His renewing power, His faithfulness and loving-kindness.* All His mighty wonders, and all the marvels of His guidance and rule, are to show forth His holiness. As in the new covenant we say God is love, so the Israelites said God is holy.

Because God is holy, His people, whom He has chosen, are by this very fact holy. There is no other holiness but that which is rooted in divine election.

But this people, chosen and redeemed, called holy, is in its actual condition ignorant, guilty, and polluted; in reality it is distant from God, and therefore God brings them nigh unto Himself. For this purpose the priesthood is chosen and the tabernacle is built.

God dwells in heaven, and therefore heaven is holy. The expression, God dwells in heaven, was well understood by Israel to refer to the manifestation of His glory, and not to any local limitation of His infinite and incomprehensible Majesty. The heaven of heavens, they acknowledged, cannot contain Him, yet is the throne of God in heaven; there His glory is beheld, and His presence adored. Now as there is in heaven the

* Psalm ciii.

holy of holies, where God Himself is, and the heavens the holy place where God's angels are; so in the earthly tabernacle the holy of holies and the holy place are the two places where the presence, the glory, and the gracious blessing of the covenant God are vouchsafed to Israel. God condescends to reveal Himself there, and to give the blessings of His forgiving and sanctifying grace.

In the holy of holies was no light. "The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness."* We read that clouds and darkness are about God, and yet we know that He is light, and covereth Himself with light as with a garment. But the light in which God dwelleth is dark by excess of brightness. No man can approach unto it. No man hath seen God at any time. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," is the exclamation of even His worshippers, who know Him as the Holy One of Israel. Yet this God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, dwelling in light and glory ineffable, is the Holy God, whose love delights to draw His chosen people unto Himself, and to enrich them with the inexhaustible riches of His grace. From the throne of God shines forth the revelation of God. He who is the brightness of God's glory, the image of the invisible God, is sent forth, and we behold light in God's light. As God, who is light,

* 1 Kings viii. 12.

said on the first day, "Let there be light : and there was light," so He hath given us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How peaceful and gentle is this light. They that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death can bear and welcome it ; it is the tender mercy of God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us. Yet how perfect and infinite is this light. For he that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father. Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory ; not in that He is less glorious than the Father, less unsearchable and inexhaustible, for no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, but that men can behold the glory of the Only-begotten ; for the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled with us.

Of this light the candlestick, which stood in the holy place, was the significant emblem. Here we behold Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, the light of the world ; the Lord, upon whom was the Spirit of the Lord, anointing Him, to declare salvation unto the broken-hearted ; the Messiah, who came in the sevenfold plenitude of the Holy Ghost, and who was continually revealing the Father. The light of the holy of holies, which was unapproachable, the glory of the Most High, was beheld when Jesus lived on earth, when He, who was in the bosom of the Father, came to reveal Him. But as He manifested the Father,

so He also revealed the perfection of humanity; He was filled with the Spirit, and always walked in the Spirit. It is as Immanuel that He is the candlestick. He came to be a mediator, to reveal God, and to bring the light of God in our hearts. He is the light of the world in such a way, that sinful men, becoming one with Him, are also the light of the world. He is able to say unto His disciples: "Let your light so shine before men!" Our light, and yet His light, even as the branches have life, but no other life than that which the True Vine gives them. Hence in the book of Revelation we behold seven golden candlesticks, the seven churches. Christ the Lord walks in the midst of them; nay, He is the light within them. And although in that which is spiritual every part forms a complete and individual whole, yet are the seven one; even as every believer may be viewed as a temple, yet is there only one temple, one spiritual house, even Christ's, who is one with all His saints.

Wonderful light, so clear and simple that little children behold it, and rejoice; so peaceful and consoling that they who cry out of the depths salute it as the dawn of sweetest hope; so perfect and infinite that the more we contemplate it the more we desire "to know Him," and long for the day when He shall appear, and we shall know even as we are known; so high above us and so

deep within us, even in the very central seat of vision, transfiguring and transforming us, nay, shining out of us into the dark world of sin and misery. "I will dwell in the thick darkness," saith God; for He is God, and through all the ages all His angels and saints shall worship Him, vailing their faces and adoring His awful majesty; but He is the Holy One who delights in mercy, in giving, in shining forth into our hearts, in filling heaven and earth with His glory. In Jesus Christ we have and are light. Oh that the waves of light out of the heavenly sanctuary would descend continually into our souls with sanctifying, gladdening, and transforming power!

But in the holy place stood also the table and the shew-bread. Jesus Christ is the light of life. Life and light; these mysterious highest blessings are inseparably connected. In Christ, as the eternal uncreated Word, was life, and the life is the light of men.* The Word is only another name for light; it is the manifestation, the expression of that which is hidden. We behold, we hear God in the Son of His love. The Lord brings to us both life and light. There can be no spiritual light proceeding from God without life. To know Him and Jesus Christ is life eternal. Except a man be *born* again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God. And there is no spiritual

* John i. 3.

life without light. With God is the fountain of life, and in His light do we see light.

Bread is the symbol of life. Bread is the peculiar food of humanity. It grows out of the earth, and is the result of human labour and diligence. It is of all nourishment the most important, essential, and precious. When we combine the symbolism of earthly bread with the symbolism of the manna which God sent to the Jews in the desert, we are prepared to understand the deep teaching of our Lord who presents Himself as the living Bread, the Bread that comes down from heaven, the Bread of life. He is the Son heaven-given, the Child earth-born, the Life and the Giver of life; and through His death on the cross He became bread for all poor sinners, whose faith in Him can be so fitly compared with eating, satisfying their hunger after righteousness, and in their emptiness grasping and rejoicing in the fulness of God's redemption.

The shew-bread, or bread of presence, set before God was a type of Jesus, as the delight of His heavenly Father, who was always well pleased in Him, and satisfied with His love and obedience. The number twelve shows that for each tribe which the High Priest bore on His breast-plate, there was bread and abundance; for Jesus came that we might have life, and that abundantly. The priests, even all Christians, feed now on the true

bread in the presence of God. And as in the candlestick we behold in the first place Christ, the true light; and in the second place Christ in the Church, the light of the world; so may we also behold in the twelve loaves a reference to Christ in His people. Jesus was the corn of wheat that died. Jesus was the sheaf of the first-fruits, which, on the morrow after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, was waved before the Lord; and fifty days after His resurrection the Holy Ghost descended, and the disciples were filled with the Spirit. Then was the Church born, then the two loaves of fine flour were presented unto the Lord; for we are the first-fruits of His creatures. And thus we read also that Jesus, entering the heart, sups with us and we with Him.

The apostle does not mention the golden altar of incense symbolizing the intercession of our adorable Lord, and the presentation of our petitions by Him unto the Father. The candlestick, the table, and the golden altar—light, life, and acceptable worship, are inseparably connected. Christ Jesus, God and man, is the true Light, the true, substantial, living, and life-giving Bread, the true Intercessor. Yet so perfect is His mystical union with His believing people, according to the love of the Father, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, that we also are seven golden candlesticks, children of light, and light-bearers; that we

also are an acceptable offering unto the Lord; and that the prayers of saints ascend as incense unto the heavenly throne.

To us it is given to understand the full meaning of these divine symbols, to behold in the one Lord Jesus Christ the manifold wisdom of God, to receive in the one unspeakable gift all the gifts of eternal blessedness. The brightness of gospel light brings us to the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Knowing Him, who is all, we contemplate with delight each single type, that so we may grow in adoring knowledge, and be increasingly established in the comforting and sanctifying truth. Let us, then, look also with reverence into the most holy, which was separated by a veil, itself a type, from the first tabernacle.

The apostle enumerates seven things as belonging to it—types of seven divine and heavenly realities: (1) The golden censer; (2) The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold; (3) The golden pot that had manna; (4) Aaron's rod that budded; (5) The tables of the covenant; (6) The cherubims of glory; (7) The mercy-seat.*

The apostle does not explain the meaning of these things, but he simply refers to them. His wish therefore is merely to remind us of the manifold symbols by which the solemn realities of the

* In the sanctuary we noticed three things, in the most holy seven.

heavenly sanctuary were signified by the Holy Ghost.

1. In the book of Exodus (xxx. 34-38) we read a full description of the incense, which was regarded as most holy. The golden censer containing it brings before us the intercession of our Lord at the right hand of God; this is the only perfect prevailing mediation, fragrant and delightful unto the Father, whereby all our sin-defiled and imperfect petitions, praises, and gifts are well-pleasing unto the Most High.

2. The ark of the covenant, sometimes called simply the ark, or the ark of testimony; or in the last passage where it occurs, "The holy ark," with (3) The golden pot that had manna; (4) Aaron's rod that budded; and (5) The tables of the covenant.

The ark was a symbol that God was present among His people, that His covenant blessing was resting upon them. It was the most sacred and glorious instrument of the sanctuary; yea, the whole sanctuary was built for no other end, but to be as it were a house and habitation for the ark.* Hence sanctification proceeded unto all the other parts of it; for, as Solomon observed, the places were holy whereunto the ark of God came.† The nations took it to be the Gods that the Israelites worshipped.‡ "God gave this

* Exod. xxvi. 33.

† 2 Chron. viii. 11.

‡ 1 Sam. iv. 8.

ark that it might be a representation of Christ, and He took it away to increase the desire and expectation of the Church after Him and for Him. And as it was the glory of God to hide and cover the mysterious counsels of His will under the Old Testament, whence this ark was so hidden from the eyes of all men, so under the New Testament, it is His glory to reveal and make them open in Jesus Christ.”* It contained originally (and the apostle is not here giving an account of the actual condition of the temple, but of the original and perfect design) the manna, or the symbol of the heaven-descended, real, spiritual, and therefore hidden bread,† which they who overcome shall know and taste perfectly in the Paradise of God. It contained also the rod of Aaron that budded, whereby God confirmed the election of Aaron and his sons to be priests unto Him. This is a beautiful and striking type of Him who is Priest according to the power of **an** endless life, of Him who was dead, and, behold, He liveth for evermore, of the Rod out of **the** stem of Jesse, of the Man whose name is the branch, and who shall be a Priest upon His throne.‡ It contained also the tables of the covenant, in which God had written His holy law. These tables testified against Israel’s sin and hardness of heart. And at first

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.—Owen.

† Rev. ii.

‡ Isaiah xi. 1 ; Zech. iii. 8 ; vi. 12, 13.

sight it seems strange and alarming that in the ark of merciful covenant-presence, besides the manna and the symbol of resurrection-life and unfading youth, we should behold the accusing and condemning witness of the broken law. But the law which condemns us is and ever remains holy, just, and good; and the God who justifies us is none other than the just God. Not merely is the propitiation, the covering and atoning blood, sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, but the law of God was magnified and fulfilled by Christ; as is written in the psalm, "Thy law is within my heart."* Our Advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous.

Then there were the cherubim of glory. There is no reason why we should view the cherubim as mere personifications either of divine powers or the Church. We read of them as of other celestial beings, as of the seraphim who stand before God's throne, and as of the angels or messengers whom God sends forth to do His commandments, and to minister unto the heirs of salvation. We read of them as guarding the entrance into the garden of Eden after man's fall. Afterwards in the Psalms, as the chariot of the Lord, and in the visions of Ezekiel, they appear as the representatives of creation and the mediators and agents of divine life-power in the world.†

* Psalm xl. 8.

† Ps. xviii. 10; Ezek. i. 4, etc.

In the book of Revelation also we read of them as the living beings. We may in a general way call them angels, as the apostle Peter does with evident reference to the mercy-seat. These high angelic creatures—thus mysteriously connected with the divine world-rule—behold with eager and adoring desire the glory of God in Christ Jesus, God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, the eternal counsel of divine love fulfilled in the redemption through the blood of the Lamb. Thus the apostle teaches us, that by the church the manifold wisdom of God is shown unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places. And in harmony with this sublime truth is the song of the heavenly host on Bethlehem's plains, "Glory to God in the highest," and the majestic ascription of praise to the Lamb, which the myriads of angels offer in the vision of the apostle John, and to which the four living beings respond, Amen.

And what shall we say of the mercy-seat? Even in the holy of holies, when we have contemplated so many symbols of the most solemn character, we pause in reverential silence as we are brought to this highest manifestation of the divine presence of holiness and love. Here we behold the propitiation through faith in the blood of the Son of God; the atonement which, while it covers our sins, manifests the glory of God, and reveals to us and to all angels the depths of divine

wisdom, grace, truth, the marvellous union of all His glorious perfections : *God is love.*

Have we come to the blood-besprinkled mercy-seat? What other position can we take than either remain outside, far from God and strangers to His love, or enter by faith, now that the veil is rent, into the holy of holies? If it is true that Jesus is *the* way, and that no man cometh to the Father, but by Him, can we approach, can we pray, can we adore in any other way than in and by Jesus? in any other place than in the heavenly sanctuary? We cannot go back by the works of the law into the garden of Eden. The cherub with the flaming sword guards the entrance. But even the cherubim will adore with children of Eve, guilty and fallen, when in repentance and trust we look unto the Lord our righteousness, the Lamb in the midst of the throne! A bond of more thrilling tenderness binds Jesus to us sinful men than to the angels.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHRIST ENTERED IN BY HIS OWN BLOOD.

HEBREWS ix. 7-14.

THE apostle, having briefly referred to the glory of the first tabernacle, contrasts now the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies on the day of atonement and the typical sacrifice, which sanctified to the purifying of the flesh with the entrance of our Lord into heaven itself by His own blood, and the real and spiritual purification connected with Christ's one oblation. The type was necessarily imperfect; the fulfilment is perfect. The former consisted of many parts. There is a multiplicity of sacrifices, and yet, even when combined, there is still imperfection. The latter possesses a marvellous simplicity, for Christ is the one sacrifice, by whom all the purposes of God, as to our redemption, and sanctification, and future glory, are fulfilled. In the type, the purification was legal, ceremonial, provisional—it admitted the worshipper to the services of the worldly sanctuary; in the fulfilment, the conscience is purged,

and we have access, continuous and for ever, unto the throne of God. In the type, the very sanctuary itself required to be cleansed by expiatory sprinklings, the sins of priests and worshippers in their relationship to the sanctuary needed atonement, and through this purification the continuance of typical sacrificial communion with God was secured; in the fulfilment, through the blood of Christ, heaven itself is the sanctuary in which we worship, and as Christ is there for ever, our acceptance and worship know no interruption or cessation. Thus the type itself, witnessing throughout of its imperfection, points to the glorious fulfilment.

The way into the holiest, access to the very presence of God, was not yet made manifest. While the priests went always into the holy place, accomplishing the service of God, kindling the lamps, laying shew-bread every Sabbath-day upon the table, and offering incense on the golden altar, they were not allowed to enter into the holy of holies. Even the high priest could not enter, except once a year, on the day of atonement—that solemn and awful day, on which, divested of his golden and glorious robes, without the mitre, the embroidered vest, and the breast-plates, he entered in the garments of humility, offering for himself and for the errors of the people. Even on that day the high priest's entrance into the holy of holies was imperfect; for he was by no means to

see clearly the ark of the covenant with the mercy-seat; the cloud of incense was to be a covering, lest he die.*

But now Christ is come, and now begins the dispensation, not again of the first tent, or of the holy place, but of that symbolized by the Most Holy—of the heavenly sanctuary itself—of the worship in Spirit and in truth—of entrance into the holy of holies, where the great High Priest is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. What a contrast to the Levitical dispensation!

Even in the first tent, or part of the tabernacle, the relation of the people with God was through the priesthood. The sacrifice, by which alone access could be given to sinful men, according to divine holiness, had not yet been offered; hence the conscience of the worshipper was not perfect,

* This then was perfectly evident, that the Jewish dispensation was characterized by the holy place, and that access into the "most holy" was as yet not revealed and given to the chosen people. The whole structure of the tabernacle, and the whole arrangement of services, made this clear to every single-hearted and conscientious Israelite. He must have known, and was continually reminded, that the most holy place with the mercy-seat was hid in deepest mystery; that it was as yet veiled and inaccessible; that the blood of goats and calves could not really take away sins; and that the imperfection of these sacrifices was manifest both because they had to be repeated, and because the veil remained, which separated even the priests from the mercy-seat. The God-fearing Israelite must have felt that meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances, were only figurative, preparatory—an intermediate education as well as promise and pledge of the times of reformation, of fulfilment and substance,

and his service was not in liberty. But now, through the death of Christ, believers are brought from the first tabernacle and priestly mediation into the true archetype of the earthly holy of holies, into the heavenly sanctuary itself, having the conscience perfect according to divine righteousness, and in the spirit of liberty, in the knowledge of the infinite love of God.

Hence, there is a real and great difference between believers in the new covenant dispensation and in the old. It is true that there was at all times only one way of salvation, only one righteousness through faith in the divinely-appointed Substitute provided by God for guilty sinners. But the difference between the condition of believers before the death of Christ and those after is indicated fully in this and the succeeding chapter, in harmony with the whole Pauline teaching.* *The law made nothing perfect.*

But, as the apostle triumphantly continues, Messiah is come, the high priest of good things to come; that is, of eternal blessings which shall be fully revealed and bestowed in the ages to come, but the substance of which is ours already, even spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He Himself is the true tabernacle. Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, He is called from His very infancy that holy Thing

* Rom. iii. 25.

or Sanctuary. This Body the Father prepared ; He built it by the Holy Ghost to be the tabernacle of divine glory. The Word was made flesh, tabernacled with us, and we beheld the Son's glory. He was the Light of the world, the golden candlestick ; He was the Bread of the countenance, and from His pure humanity, as well as His filial divinity (inseparably united), ascended the true incense unto God, even as afterwards He intercedes in the holy of holies. But while on earth Jesus is only the Holy Place ; not yet has He entered into the very presence of God, into heaven itself. Before He can ascend to His God and our God, to His Father and our Father, He must die ; His flesh is the veil, and the veil must be rent. True, His flesh also is without sin. Blessed be God, in Him was nothing but Spirit and life. He came in the weakness and in the likeness of sinful flesh, for thus it was necessary in order to bring us unto God. He learned obedience, He submitted His human will to the Father's, and in all His walk, trial, and suffering He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. But, as the apostle explains it, because man was without righteousness, inasmuch as the law could not be fulfilled in us, through the sinful weakness of the *flesh*, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. When Jesus died on the cross,

then God condemned sin. When the body of Christ was broken, then God judged sin—executed sentence on it—and in the true and real sense destroyed it for evermore.

Notice how careful the apostle is to remind us in this very passage of Christ's divinity.* Who is this man on the cross in the weakness of sinful flesh? Who is this man in whose sacrifice of Himself God the Judge condemns sin? He is God's own Son, eternal, infinite, all-glorious. Wonderful veil rent by God Himself! But now is Christ no longer the Holy Place, but the Most Holy, the Holy of Holies. See Him on the right hand of God; see now the throne of God a throne of grace; with His own blood He entered, and the manifestation of God between the cherubim is now God reconciled to us in Christ Jesus, our Father and covenant God. Jesus, who glorified the law, manifesting it in His person and life, and fulfilling and exhausting both its precepts and its curse, is the ark wherein the tables of the law were hid; He Himself is the mercy-seat, the propitiation, revealing the holy love of God with such brightness and perfection that angels desire to look into this mystery. He has the hidden manna by which He sustains our inner life on earth, and shall communicate to us in eternity renewed strength; and He is the rod, which,

* Rom. viii. 3.

though cut off and given over unto death, budded forth in resurrection-power, and is living for evermore; thus proving Him to be the true Priest after the power of an indissoluble life. The veil is rent; Christ died on the cross; we see the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. The darkness is past; no cloud of incense conceals the mystery; Christ has no veil on His face when for us He appears in the presence of God; and we also with open face behold the *Father*.

The whole throne of God is irradiated now by the sweet and peaceful light of *mercy*, for the Lamb who found an eternal redemption is at the right hand of God. The Father Himself loveth us; God the just and holy One hath accepted us in the Beloved. Here is what no symbol could prefigure. Jesus, both Sacrifice and Priest, has fulfilled Aaronic types, and reigns after the order of Melchisedec, while presenting us continually unto the Father, is always sympathizing with us in our infirmities and temptations, and supplying all needful strength unto us in our earthly pilgrimage and conflict.

But let us reverently consider the way by which Jesus entered, and the position which is thereby given unto all believers of God. We notice two expressions. He entered in once by His own

blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us, and, the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unto God.

Not without awe and trembling, and yet with deep and solemn joy, ought a Christian to speak of the precious blood of Christ. Here is the very heart, the inmost sanctuary of our faith. Marvel not, brethren, that this doctrine is at all times, both to wise Greeks and self-righteous Jews, the stumbling-block and the rock of offence. But where man's reason can see no wisdom, where the unrenewed mind doubts, cavils, and mocks, the saints of God adore, and expect to adore for ever. Here is indeed the centre of all divine revelations. With increasing clearness this mystery shines through the whole Scripture. Do we not see it in the better sacrifice of Abel? Do we not behold it on the door-posts of Israel, on the memorable night of the passover? Does it not meet us on every page of Leviticus? Do we not hear it in the solemn and emphatic declaration: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin?" Does it not shine forth in all the ordinances of the tabernacle? Can we not discover it in the words of Isaiah, when he speaks of Messiah pouring out His life? and in the words of Zechariah, "They shall look unto me, whom they pierced"? Jesus the Lord declared "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His

blood, ye have no life in you;" and on the last evening said, "This is the new testament in my blood; this is my blood, shed for the remission of sins." In like manner all the apostolic epistles assign peculiar importance as to the death of the Lord, so especially to the shedding of His precious blood; and in the culminating book of Scripture, the Apocalypse, the doctrine is asserted with peculiar solemnity. The beloved disciple ascribes glory and honour unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father; and all the heavenly doxologies, the voice of celestial angels and saints, ascribe redemption to the blood of Christ; to the blood they ascribe the righteousness of the saints, as well as their triumph over sin and evil.

On no subject is the apostolic teaching so emphatic, so lucid, so abundant. This truth filled their hearts, and was their central thought. By the blood of Christ we who were far off were made nigh; by His blood we are justified; Christ suffered that He might sanctify us by His blood; we possess (and that for ever) redemption through His blood; His blood cleanseth us from all sin, and the Church has been purchased with this precious price.*

* Eph. ii. 13; Rom. v. 9; Heb. xiii. 12; Eph. i. 7; 1 J. i. 7; Acts xx. 28; Rev. i. 5; v. 9, etc.

As the types teach us, the great object of the death of Christ was, that His blood might be shed. By His own blood He entered into the holy place.

And as in no single sacrifice could be adequately represented the power and efficacy of His precious blood, the apostle mentions here, not merely the blood of bulls and of goats, but also the ashes of an heifer. By the former the high priest, the priests, and the people were ceremonially purified, their iniquities and transgressions being removed, and the sanctuary cleansed for continued worship. By the other was symbolised the cleansing and vivifying power of Christ's blood, keeping us during our pilgrimage in this wilderness of sin and defilement.* But while these types could

* The ashes of an heifer. It was to take away the defilement of death. The institution is recorded in the book of Numbers as relating to the provision God makes for His people in their wilderness journey. As no blood of the slain victim was "incorruptible," it was necessary, in order to show the cleansing by blood from defilement through contact with death, to have as it were the essential principle of blood presented in a permanent and available form. The red heifer, which had never been under the yoke, symbolises life in its most vigorous, perfect, and fruitful form. She was slain without the camp. (Heb. xiii. 11; Num. xix. 3, 4.) She was *wholly* burnt, flesh, skin, and blood, the priest casting cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet into the fire. The ashes of the burnt heifer, put into flowing water, were then sprinkled with hyssop for ceremonial purification. It is also important to notice that it was not Aaron or the high priest himself to whom the red heifer was given, but to his son or successor. The high priest was to be separate from death. Here also we see the imperfection of the type. Our victim is the Lord of life, who by the eternal Spirit offered Him-

not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, but were given in the mercy of God for an intermediate period, and to bring in a better hope, the blood of Christ, by which He entered into the holy of holies, brings unto us eternal redemption and heavenly perfection. Here the sanctification (*ἀγιάζει* v. 13) is real.

We are separated from God the *Holy* One by sin, from God the *living* One by death. In order to bring us into communion with God, and to purge our consciences, we have to be delivered both from the guilt of sin and the defilement and

self and rose in the power of an endless life. Christ is the fulfilment. For the blood of Christ is not merely, so to speak, the key unlocking the holy of holies to Him as our High Priest and Redeemer, it is not merely our ransom by which we are delivered out of bondage, and, freed from the curse, are brought nigh unto God; but it also separates us from death and sin. It is incorruptible, always cleansing and vivifying; through this blood we are separated from this evil world, and overcome; by this blood we keep our garments white. (John vi. 53; Rev. vii. 14.) What had necessarily to be separated in the types, is here in unity and perfection. Likewise, what *really* and *potentially* is given to us when we are first brought into the state of reconciliation and access, of justification and sanctification, is in our actual experience continually repeated. We have been cleansed and sanctified once and for ever; the same blood, remembered and believed in, cleanseth us continually.

The difference between this continuous cleansing and the first (according to John xiii.) must never be forgotten, or we fall into a legal condition, going back from the holy of holies into the holy place. But, on the other hand, we must not forget the *living* character of the blood, which by the Spirit is continually applied to us, and by which we have peace, renewal of the sense of pardon, and strength for service. (1 Peter i. 2.)

power of death. Now of the types which purified unto the (typical) service, the blood of Jesus is the antitype. By the blood of Christ we are brought into the presence of the holy and living God. This is our sanctification, in which we are separated and cleansed unto the worship and service of God. We are separated from the world of sin and death, from dead works; by which we must understand everything which is not the manifestation of a divinely-given and wrought life; because nothing is fit to be brought before and unto the living God unless it be living, or spiritual, or proceeding from communion with the living One.

But if we ask, Why is this blood so precious, so efficacious, so all-prevailing? the answer is, Not merely because it is innocent, pure, and sinless, the life of a perfect and holy Man laid down voluntarily, the blood of One who had perfectly fulfilled the law of God, but because Jesus through the eternal Spirit offered Himself; that is, Jesus who died was God, eternal, infinite, and according to the eternal counsel of the triune Godhead He laid down His life. To Him the Father had given to have life in Himself. He is the Lord of glory—Spirit.* The Scriptures always remind us of the Godhead when they speak of the death of Jesus. The Son of God loved me, and gave

* 1 Cor. ii. 8; 2 Cor. iii. 17.

Himself for me. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. God purchased the Church with His own blood. He, who died, is the Son of God in human nature. And as in Him the divine nature and the human nature are *one* Person, so His blood, which in His infinite love He shed on the cross, is of eternal and unspeakable value, and possesses divine power to redeem, sanctify, cleanse. The Son of God became man, and His holy life was poured out for us and shed forth in His blood; for He "offered Himself without spot to God." That freedom from all blemish which the ceremonial law prefigured in the sacrifices, was fulfilled in absolute perfection in the Lamb of God. It was not merely short-sighted men who could not convince Him of sin; it was not merely the testimony of Judas, who betrayed Him, and of Pontius Pilate, who pronounced the unjust sentence, and of the centurion, who stood by the cross, that Jesus was innocent, and that there was no fault in Him; it was not merely the testimony of the demons, who called Him the Holy One of God. Here we have the testimony of God. Christ was the Servant, and the Elect in whom the Father delighted. And when He offered Himself as the perfectly pure and spotless Lamb, in this His act of highest obedience as Man, He possessed all the perfection and value of His divine person; for He offered Himself by

the eternal Spirit, which expression refers not so much to the Holy Ghost as to His Sonship and union with the Father, to the eternal purpose and will of the Godhead. God was in Christ reconciling. The purpose of Christ in offering Himself was in divine as well as human perfection. His sacrifice therefore possesses the character of eternal, absolute perfection, absolute efficacy, and everlasting value.*

We who believe that Christ has entered by His own blood into the holy of holies have thereby received a fourfold assurance :

1. Christ has obtained for us eternal redemption.
2. We have access to God.
3. Our consciences are purged by the blood of Christ to serve the living God.
4. The things to come are secured to us by Him, who is the heir, and in whom even now all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are ours.

1. The redemption which Christ has obtained is eternal. The apostle uses the expression "found" redemption.† So Abraham answered the question of Isaac, God has provided the Lamb for the

* The expression in verse 12 is very emphatic—*διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος* (through the blood of His own). "Through the eternal Spirit." Compare vii. 16—"The power of an endless life." His divine and everlasting Spirit concurred with the Father's counsel of love. This point is more fully explained in chapter x.

† "Found for Himself (lit.) as a thing of insuperable difficulty to all, save divine omnipotence, self-devoting zeal and love to find."—Dr. BROWN.

offering; so in the book of Job the messenger or angel, the interpreter or mediator, one above a thousand, reveals to afflicted and sin-convinced man God's righteousness, and saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Marvellous redemption, in which all divine attributes working together are revealed, so that glory is to God in the highest, and perfect peace on earth to the men of His good pleasure. God only could provide our ransom. (Ps. xlix. 6-9.) The expression brings before us in a human way the wonderful wisdom of God, wherein He has abounded toward us, the marvellous plan of redemption, which, high above all created thought, originating in the divine mind, brought together mercy and truth, justice and grace in harmonious unity, and made the dark object of sin the occasion of the brightest manifestation of divine glory. Thus the Lord commends His own wisdom, and in the prophets frequently stirs up our sluggish mind to regard with wonder and astonishment His great salvation. Christ's precious blood can never lose its power, till all the chosen saints of God are gathered unto glory. It is a *real* redemption from the guilt and power of sin, from the curse of the law, from the wrath of God, from the bondage of Satan, and from the second death; an *eternal* redemption, because sin is forgiven; Satan, death, and hell are vanquished;

everlasting righteousness is brought in ; we are saved for evermore. Jesus has redeemed us. By dying in our stead, by bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, by satisfying all the claims which a holy God had against us, by being made a sin-offering and a curse for us, the Lord delivered us from our bondage and captivity. His blood was the ransom. Because we are redeemed according to divine *righteousness*, death has no sting ; we are no longer through fear of death subject to bondage. Sin has no more dominion over us, for the death of Christ has set us free to the service and obedience of God. The wrath of God abideth no longer on us, for the atoning blood speaks now only of mercy and everlasting love. Satan can no longer lay anything to the charge of God's elect.

He found redemption where man would never have thought of it. He found it after His incarnation and path of obedience in the death of the cross, in the darkness of agony, and He brought it forth in brightness and beauty, glory and strength, by His resurrection from the dead.

2. We have now access to God ; we are brought into the very presence of God ; we enter into the holy of holies. The veil no longer conceals the counsel of God's wonderful love ; sin in the flesh no longer separates us from the presence of the Most High. Very awful, and yet most blessed

and sweet, is this assurance. God is very near to each one of us. Though we see Him not, yet is He nearer than the very air we breathe; for our very being and living and moving is in Him. He is very near unto us, and all our thoughts and desires are open before Him, who is the searcher of hearts. Yet, although such is the exceeding nearness of God to us, we are at an exceeding great distance from God. Who can measure the distance of the prodigal in the far country from the father's house? But we can describe that distance by one syllable, short though terrible—*sin*. Now He by whom alone sin can be forgiven and removed is nowhere else but on the throne of God—on His right hand. With Him is forgiveness of sin. In heaven is my righteousness; in the throne of God, and nowhere else, my hope, my comfort, and my trust. He who has found and saved me, lost and guilty sheep; He who by His death has redeemed me, has taken me on His shoulder. He is no longer here. As He died unto sin once, I seek Him no longer among the dead. He is ascended. Rejoicing has He gone home, and called His friends together to rejoice over the sheep now with Him in the land of peace. Hence there is no other place for me but heaven itself. *Everywhere else I see only sin and condemnation.* Where can I pray or approach God without a Mediator,

without the blood, without the High Priest? But the blood of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, the interceding High Priest Jesus, *is in heaven itself*. Then I also must pray and worship there. I have no other hiding-place but *Christ in heaven*.

You who have come to Jesus, who have looked unto Him and were healed, you stand now on the other side of the cross, within the veil, in the holy of holies. You have obtained mercy. God forgave all your sins, and clothed you with Christ. In this state into which God has brought you there can henceforth be no change. Your knowledge and enjoyment of it may vary and grow, your faithfulness and service fluctuate, your experience may rise and fall; but you are always children of God, forgiven, beloved, compassed about with divine mercy, and embraced in the very love which the Father has to Jesus.

We are not like the Jewish priests, who, under the former tabernacle stayed outside the unrent veil, and never came into the presence of God; not like the believer in the old dispensation, who offered continually sacrifices, which were needed on account of his repeated sins, but which were shadows, and only procured a ceremonial cleansing in hope of the future expiation. We have been pardoned, redeemed, made righteous once for all; God beholds us in Christ His Son;

we are always before God by reason of that sacrifice which has put away sin, and by reason of the presence of the Lord, whom the Father calls My Son, and who is not ashamed to call us brethren. If the blood of the passover-lamb protected the Israelites in Egypt, and secured to them perfect safety, if the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat in the holy of holies covered Israel's transgressions of the divine law, how much more does the precious blood of Christ, by which He entered into heaven itself, and with which He there appears before God for us, cleanse us from all sin, so that we are accounted by Him holy and without blame?

For (3) to you has been given, what the old covenant saints did not possess, *perfection*—the absolution and remission of sins. Your conscience has been purged and made free; once for all God has received you in Christ Jesus, has pardoned and accepted you, has invested you with everlasting righteousness. You have no conscience any longer of sin. There is no guilt on you. There is no condemnation. You have been acquitted judicially. That which in the eternal counsel was decreed for you, that which by the death and resurrection of Jesus was obtained for you, was actually and perfectly given unto you when the grace of God was exceeding abundant unto you, with faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. Our con-

science pronounces us just and accepted, even as God pronounces us just and accepted, and that for the same reason. The same blood which was sprinkled on the mercy-seat has touched and purged our consciences. We know that we have been made the righteousness of God in Him ; we know that according to all the perfections of God we are forgiven and saved. No longer, therefore, is our conscience burdened or defiled by the knowledge of alienation from God, and the fear of His displeasure.

But are there many such heavenly worshippers in the liberty and power of the new covenant? While we mourn over Israel's blindness, and the veil on their hearts, are we with open face beholding the glory of the Lord? Among the people who listen to the gospel, are there not many who hear and speak constantly of divine mercy and pardon, and yet never come to a full, decided, and conscious reception of the grace of God? They believe that those who are justified by faith have peace, but they themselves have no peace. As the Jews of old had continually to offer sacrifices, so they repeat continually the same petitions for pardon and acceptance, and with the same indistinct and vague consciousness as to their acceptance. The Jews were not in the full light, but it was not owing to their unbelief; but now that the true light shineth, why are souls in

gloom and uncertainty ; now that the summer is come, why is the heart dreary without sunshine and melody ?

It is because the conscience has not been set free by the blood of Christ. In that mysterious judgment-chamber, where busy thoughts, like subtle and eager pleaders, accuse and excuse one another, a voice, whose authority we cannot dispute, declares us guilty, and the testimony of God, which is greater than our conscience, reveals to us more fully our sin and condemnation. But when we are convinced of our sin, and utter ruin and helplessness, God is revealed as a just God, and the justifier of the guilty, who believe in Jesus ; the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, reveals to us the holy and perfect way in which all iniquity is pardoned and all transgression removed. And as that blood avails in heaven, so it delivers the conscience from the burden of guilt, and from the burden of all our own miserable attempts at pleasing God and lulling our fears : dead works which like a dead weight only increase our wretchedness. Now we truly turn from sin unto God. In Christ Jesus God and the sinner meet ; both behold the blood of the Lord Jesus, and in the high sanctuary above and in the inmost sanctuary of the conscience there is *peace*.

And now if Jesus says to thee, " Be of good

cheer ; thy sins are forgiven thee," then *be of good cheer*, and rest in the love of God. See how in all the epistles addressed to God's children forgiveness of sin, redemption, acceptance in Christ, are fundamental blessings and gifts, which all believers are supposed to have received by faith, and once for all.

Yet the conscience thus purged is more sensitive. We know now more of our sinfulness ; for we behold sin in the light of God's love. What then ? Of sin we have no conscience ; but of our sinfulness and constant sinning we have. We confess our sins ; we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses ;" we mourn over our unfaithfulness ; we behold and abhor our vileness ; we have no confidence in the flesh. But we confess to the Father as children ; we confess before the throne of grace, and in the hearing of the merciful and compassionate High Priest. We learn the deepest and most self-abasing lesson ; to go with sin and unworthiness to infinite Love, to boundless compassion, to never-failing mercy, to the Father who loves us, to the Lord who always intercedes for us. We have been washed once for all when we came to Jesus. We need now to have our feet washed. Peter either refuses to have his feet washed by Jesus (false humility), or wishes Jesus to wash not merely his feet, but also his hands and his head (unbelief and false humility again) ; but when after

wards he understood the ways of God, he strengthened his brethren. For in his epistle he teaches them, that if we forget that we have been purged from our sins we become unfruitful and blind: the knowledge of our perfect and complete acceptance is the strength of obedience.

For with the conscience troubled and defiled, man has only dead works. There is no life in his feelings, prayers, words, or actions; for is he not separate from the fountain of life? But, as Martin Luther delighted to say—for what we are always experiencing, we must express always—where there is forgiveness of sin, there is life and all blessedness. We do not obtain forgiveness by good works, but through the forgiveness of sin come good works. First remove sin from the conscience, and it will also be dethroned in the heart.

There are three classes of men. The worst, those who do not feel sin as a burden on their conscience, but cherish it as an idol in the heart. Oh what a discovery in the eternal world, that the burden is intolerable, and that the idol is an everlasting torment! Then there are men who try to cleanse the heart, and to lead a pure life, and hope thereby to remove the burden of guilt on the conscience. Who can help loving such? But not so can you obtain either a peaceful conscience or a God-loving heart. Christ is God's righteousness for

man. First the conscience is delivered, and thus the heart is renewed; and out of the renewed heart flows living obedience. "To serve the living God." It is by a constantly-exercised faith in and by the power of the blood of Christ, that we now serve the living God. Being made free from sin, by the death of Christ, we became the servants of righteousness, servants to God, and have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* Dead works cannot please a living God; but we walk now in newness of life, serving Him with gladness of heart.† The living God—it is said emphatically; for only the believer realizes God as living, present, sending down continually the influence of His grace.

Men speak of going to heaven. Go to heaven now! Not death, but faith, will take you there. Jesus is in heaven, the Son of man, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Look up to heaven, all ye ends of the earth, poor, guilty,

• Rom. vi. 22.

† The character of the New Testament obedience is liberty. As it proceeds from the love of a forgiven and renewed heart, and as it is in the power of the indwelling Spirit, it does not stand in need of outward regulations and legal enactments. We are to reverence, and diligently to study all the instruction and precepts of God's Word. But how different are these from that kind of devotional and ascetic help of our day, which seeks to regulate the inner life, by prescribing prayers for different hours, &c. Such things keep the soul, if not in bondage, in an infantine condition of weakness. Contrast with this: "Enoch walked with God;" "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" "Follow Me."

needy ones. Believe it, you will see there a Father, a Saviour, the Mediator of the new and eternal covenant, the blood of atonement ; you will see a throne, and *adore* ; a throne of *grace*, and you will rejoice. Thus you will in truth and reality belong to heaven. You will be able to say even in the present time, " My citizenship is in heaven ; " for Christ is your High Priest and Lord at the right hand of God, and He ministers even now " good things," spiritual and heavenly blessings, of which the full and perfect manifestation will be the inheritance at His second coming.

Thus all depends on the character of worship. Opposed to the condition of the self-righteous or careless world, and contrasted with the condition of the Old Testament dispensation of figure, which never led believers beyond the first tabernacle or holy place, is the new covenant worship in Spirit and truth. It is with a conscience purged from sin ; it is in the very presence of God ; it is through the mediation of the one High Priest ; it is in virtue of that same blood, in which alone is eternal redemption. In this worship only are we free, in heavenly places, and separated and delivered from this evil world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

HEBREWS ix. 15-28.

THE scope of the apostle's argument, from verses 15-28, is as follows :

Christ entered with the price of an eternal redemption into the presence of God. The first effect of His entrance is, that our conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God. (*v.* 14.) The second effect is, that thereby Christ has become the Mediator of the New Testament, in order that the called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (*v.* 15.) The death of Christ was necessary to establish this testament; for even the first covenant was "not without blood." And this blood was applied to the book and the people; to the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry; and to "almost all things," in order to continue the approach of Israel and their service. (*vv.* 19, 21, 23.) The antitype or fulfilment in the New Testament is, that our conscience has been purged; the heavenly sanc-

tuary has been purified with better sacrifice ; and after the One and perfect offering which Jesus brought once for all, no repetition of the sacrifice is possible or needed. Christ has abolished sin, and we wait now for His second coming in glory.

Jesus by His death has become the Mediator of the New Testament. It is because Jesus died that He now dispenses the gifts which He has purchased. The New Testament is in his hand. He is the Mediator, bringing us as true worshippers, unto God ; and bringing the inheritance, with all its blessings and gifts, unto us.

There is perhaps no word with which we are more familiar, and which is more frequently used by us than the word "covenant" or "testament." We are in the habit of calling the sacred books of Israel and of the church, the books of the Old and New Testament. And in that precious ordinance of the Saviour, which according to His will is to be the joy of His disciples, as well as their testimony to the world until He come, we hear constantly the solemn words : "This cup is the New Testament in my blood."

Words which are frequently used are not necessarily correctly understood or rightly valued. And then our very familiarity with them is the source of danger. For the incorrect or inadequate idea, which we connect with the expression, becomes

deeply fixed in our minds, and the fundamental misconception brings forth abundant and widely-ramified error. For these very familiar and constantly-recurring words express mother-ideas of primary importance.

Our only safety is a constant and diligent study of Scripture, and a conscientious adherence to the principle, that Scripture thoughts and words are to be explained and judged on Scripture territory according to the Scripture circle of truth, and the Scripture mode of viewing and expressing things. If we apply this canon to the subject before us, we shall find that the ordinary conception of a covenant as a mutual agreement is not identical with the Biblical use of the word, and also that there is an intimate connection between the idea of an inheritance bequeathed through death, or a testament and the Scripture view of covenant.

Now the first and primary idea of covenant and testament is a disposition and order of things, made of God, and shown forth in a promise or institution. For instance, we read that God established a covenant with Noah.* Here is a divine promise, unconditional and immutable, based upon His sovereign grace; an order of things which it pleased Him to establish, and whereof He gave a double assurance, His word and the rainbow, seal and pledge of the covenant of His

* Gen. vi. ix.

grace. Again the Lord made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to be the God of Abraham and of his seed; to give unto them the land; to give unto them the seed, in whom all families of the earth will be blessed. This covenant is also unconditional and unchangeable, it is not a mutual agreement, it does not depend on man's faithful and complete fulfilment of stipulated conditions. And as it originates entirely in the purpose of eternal wisdom and love, it is impossible that it can ever be changed or frustrated. Nothing that happens in time, and subsequent to the announcement of the covenant, can in any way interfere with its fulfilment. Neither the law, given four hundred years after, nor the awful sin of Israel in rejecting their Lord and Messiah, can alter God's covenant of grace. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Abrahamic covenant had also a twofold assurance and manifestation—the word of promise, and the ordinance of circumcision.

In this covenant the testament-nature is already apparent; for here is an inheritance, and, as the apostle explains to us,* it was by promise, and given unto the one seed, Christ. The Abrahamic covenant, he also teaches us, was confirmed by God in *Christ*. And the meaning of this is evident now in the light of fulfilment. The

* Gal. iii.

covenant with Abraham was also a testament, and, as all testaments are, connected with death. It promised an inheritance, but an inheritance which could become ours only by the death of Jesus, in whom alone there is redemption for sinful and guilty men. But in order to bring out fully the character of the covenant of grace, the intermediate dispensation of the law was given. And here it is difficult to see both the contrast, sharp and distinct, between the old covenant and the new testament, and also to recognize the bond of connection between them; there is the antithesis, law and grace; there is the contrast, shadow and truth; but there is something which bound these two aspects together in the actual history and experience of God's ancient people.

For the promise given to Abraham, and not to Moses, was not superseded or forgotten in the giving of the law. When God dealt with Israel in the wilderness, He gave them the promise that they should be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people; "for all the earth is mine;" and that they should possess the land as an inheritance.* Based upon this promise, and corresponding with the divine election and favour, is the law which God gave to His people. As He had chosen and redeemed them, so they were to be a holy people, and to walk before Him, even as in the

* Exod. xix. 5, 6; xxiii. 30; Deut. xv. 4.

Ten Commandments the gospel of election and redemption came first. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of Egypt." Hence this covenant or dispensation, although it was a covenant, not of grace and divine gifts and enablings, but of works, was connected with and based upon redemption, and it was dedicated, as the apostle emphatically says, not without blood. Both the book, or record of the covenant,* and all the people, were sprinkled with the blood of typical sacrifices.† For without blood is no remission of sins, and the promises of God can only be obtained through atonement. But we know that this is a figure of the one great sacrifice, and that therefore all the promises and blessings under the old dispensation, underlying and sustaining it, were through the prospective death of the true Mediator. When therefore the spiritual Israelite was convinced by the law of sin, both as guilt and as a condition of impurity and strengthlessness, he was comforted by the promise of the inheritance, which always was of grace, uncon-

* "The book of the covenant," mentioned Exod. xxiv. 7, in which Moses wrote the first fundamental group of laws. (Exod. xxi.-xxiii.)

† "The blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop." Water, scarlet wool, and hyssop are mentioned in connection with the purification of those who had come into contact with death (Num. xix.); also of the lepers. (Lev. xiv. 4-7.) Compare also the passover (Exod. xii. 22), and the prayer of David, "Purge me with hyssop." (Ps. li. 7.)

ditional and sure, and in a righteous and holy manner through expiation.

Through the blood sprinkled by Moses on the book and people, and afterwards on the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, they were set apart unto the holy God. The tabernacle was itself established as an ordinance of *mercy* in the midst of a people who had been guilty of grievous transgression,* and the very tabernacle required to be purified by blood before the Lord could meet there with His people.

How evident is the meaning of these earthly things **now**, when we see the fulfilment in the heavenly and eternal things!

Jesus desired with desire to eat the passover with His disciples. It was on that night that He took the cup and blessed it, and said, "This is the cup of the new testament in my blood." He as the true Sacrifice—fulfilment of all the varied types—was offered for us on Golgotha. Through His death the inheritance is obtained for us; it is of grace, and it is reserved for us in heaven, while we live even now in the enjoyment of its power and blessedness. The testator is, properly speaking, God; for we are God's heirs; but it is God in Christ, even as in the death of Christ for sinners we behold God's love. Jesus is the Heir. This is the Scripture teaching. The Lord Himself in

* Exod. xxxii.

the parable presents the last Prophet sent by God into the vineyard as high above all the servants ; He is the one Son, the Only-begotten of the Father. And even His enemies draw the correct inference, that He is the *Heir*.* This is the Son whom the Father loved from all eternity, and unto whom He hath given all things.† This is He by whom the world was made, and who was appointed Heir of all things. We are joint-heirs with Christ, and the inheritance is blood-bought. But, as the types prefigure, this precious blood belongs to the heavenly sanctuary. It does not belong to earth, even as it does not open the way to an earthly temple and secure earthly blessings. It is precious, incorruptible.‡

Jesus entered with His own blood into the holy of holies. And here is the antitype of the earthly tabernacle being sprinkled with blood. Heaven is now opened to believers ; the most holy place is anointed with the blood of atonement.§ Our sins no longer ascend to heaven. The adversary can no longer accuse us before the throne of God. The Father, having made peace through

* Mark xii. 7.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ Compare in 1 Peter i. the incorruptible inheritance, the incorruptible price of redemption, and the incorruptible seed of regeneration. The whole covenant refers to Jesus ; yea, He Himself is the covenant ; for thus it is written of Him : " I will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." (Isa. xlii. 6.)

§ Dan. ix. 24.

the blood of Christ's cross, hath reconciled all things unto Himself, "whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."* So great and real is the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ.

The Saviour, who by His own blood entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us, is the Mediator of the New Testament; as the First-born He has entered into the inheritance, and He now dispenses to us the very blessings which through His death He has purchased for us.

1. Jesus has put away sin, once for all, by the sacrifice of Himself. All that stood in the way of the infinite love of God flowing into our hearts has been removed, and that for ever, unto all who believe in Jesus. In that He died, He died unto sin once for all; and we who believe in Him are delivered out of the region of sin, of defilement, and of death.

2. The blessed Lord having entered in by His blood, we also have ascended with Him. This is implied by the apostle's saying that Christ appears now in heaven *for us*. In a different but harmonious light the same truth is taught in the epistle to the Ephesians. The apostles were filled with amazement when Jesus was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight; the men of Galilee stood gazing up into heaven. But when

* Col. i. 20.

the full import of the ascension was disclosed to them, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. The beloved disciple regretted no more that he could no longer lean on the bosom of the divine Master. The apostles no longer felt that Jesus had left them, and had gone alone into the heavenly home; for they knew that they had ascended with Him, that they had died with Him, had been buried together with Him, had risen together with Him, and were seated together with Him in heavenly places.*

3. Hence with increasing clearness it became evident that believers are always before the *Father* as accepted worshippers; that in the archetype, of which the tabernacle was a picture, there was no division of the holy place and the most holy, but that all believers, as priests, are in the most holy, because Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is there "for them," and one with them.

All these truths are presented to our view and sealed to our faith in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. We notice three very strange and sad ways in which this ordinance has been misunderstood and misused. In the first place, though it was intended to illustrate and confirm the strong and sweet bond which unites all the disciples of

* The "together with" Christ begins at the crucifixion. Not the incarnation, not the prophetic life and work on earth, but the cross is the point where the Shepherd finds the lost sheep, and the two are joined.

the One Master, it has been the occasion of dividing and separating brethren, and of substituting other bonds, not so fundamental, not so comprehensive, not so profound as the one which Christ alone acknowledges, that vital faith in Him, which manifests itself in love.

Secondly, whereas the Lord's Supper was designed, by a simple illustration, to show forth spiritual mysteries, the Lord's Supper itself has been asserted to be a mystery which it is difficult to comprehend, or when comprehended to explain to others. Now, the union of Christ and the believer is indeed a mystery. Great is the mystery, exclaims the apostle. Our spiritual life, growth, and joy are rooted in Christ, in His broken body and shed blood. Here faith beholds also the communion of saints, the second advent, and our glory with Christ. But of these spiritual and unseen realities, we have in the Lord's Supper an illustration so simple, so comprehensive, that it is the easiest way of explaining to little children the gospel of our Lord. Many minds are thinking about the mystery of the sacrament, instead of thinking about the mystery of the *union with Christ* by faith and through the indwelling Spirit. For such the Gospel of John is most instructive, both on account of its silence as to the institution and its profound exposition of the "mystery," which in the Lord's Supper is set before us.

But thirdly, the very purpose of the Lord's Supper is to show that by one great sacrifice, once for all, Christ has put away sin. As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show the Lord's death. It is the commemoration of the one offering by which we are perfected. Hence to speak of a repetition of the sacrifice, in any shape or form, is to contradict the essential meaning and purpose of the ordinance.* Christ died once upon the cross, once He entered by His own blood into the holy of holies, and by this one death and once entering in we have redemption and access unto the Father. Hence all the blessings of the New Testament are ours.

Consider the teaching of our passage in the light of the Lord's Supper. Once we were under the sentence of death on account of our guilt, the transgression of God's holy law. We had forfeited the inheritance. Christ came. He is the Son;

* All assertions that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice, from the glaring fiction of Rome, of an unbloody sacrifice in the mass, down to more mystical and vague views, are refuted by this chapter and the whole teaching of Scripture. Beside the one sacrifice of our Lord, offered and presented to the Father once for all, the New Testament speaks only of spiritual sacrifices, praise, prayer, and the offering of ourselves (Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15, 16; 1 Peter ii. 8), and only of the priesthood of all believers, while it never calls ministers *ιερείς*, but bishops, presbyters, etc. These spiritual sacrifices are to be offered *continually*, the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice is to be *frequently*. A remembrance not so much of Himself, who is always with us and of whom we constantly think, but of His One oblation. There is a higher aspect of the Lord's Supper as a *sealing* ordinance.

He is the Heir. He came to save us. He came to redeem them that were under the law from the curse of the law. He redeemed us by His death on the tree, by the shedding of His precious blood.* This is the bread; this is the cup.

Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament gives us the inheritance; and of this inheritance we have now the substance, for we eat and drink in the presence of the Father. Yet is the inheritance still future; for the Lord's Supper points to the fulfilment. "Till I come" is the golden link between Christ's first advent and His return, when we shall be glorified together with Him. Jesus said to His disciples on the very night in which He instituted this ordinance: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."† We are to be made manifest with Christ, and reign together with Him. The promise is not fulfilled yet, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." But when we show the death of the Lord we look forward in hope to the final salvation, which shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

How solemn sound the words, "This is the

* Compare Gal. iii., where the subject is viewed in connection with inheritance.

† The original διατίθεμαι ὑμῖν βασιλείαν means, I ordain to you in a testamentary manner. Compare Rev. iii. 21; xii. 11; xxi. 7.

new testament in My blood." This is indeed the central, the fundamental, the eternal mystery. "Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood," we sing at the Lord's table—it will be our song in eternity. This is the new song for ever, even as it is the new testament for ever.

Blessed are we if we read Scripture, *as the testament*; if, as children and heirs, we see in the word the record of our inheritance, the promise of glory, as well as the assurance of our present possession of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

See here the perfection of the fulfilment. (*vv.* 24-27.) As the Levitical high priest entered into the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice, to appear before God as the representative of Israel, so Christ by His own blood entered heaven itself for us. But not as the type is the fulfilment. The Levitical high priest entered every year; Christ once for all. Hence there is no need of a repetition of His sacrifice. Once He appeared in the end of the world, in the consummation of the ages. In the fulness of time* Jesus was made manifest to put away sin really and for ever. He was made manifest, for in the counsel of God He was, from before the foundation of the world, the Lamb; but now the time was come when He fulfilled the salvation-will of God.† Once He bore the sins of many;‡ as their substitute He endured that

* Gal. iv. 4.

† Comp. 1 Peter i. 20.

‡ Isa. liii. 12.

which sin deserved according to the holiness and righteousness of God. This is accomplished, and perfect; it now lies behind Him.

What then is our position? The apostle by a very significant transition speaks now of *man*; leaving the contrast between Jewish type and heavenly reality, he enters, strictly speaking, into the sphere of the gospel, the glad tidings for mankind. Now the contrast is Adam and Christ. The apostle's statement (*vv.* 26–28) may be rendered more faithfully thus: But now once for all, in the conclusion of the ages, hath He been manifest to put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that judgment (or decision); thus Christ, having been once offered in order to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time without sin for the salvation of them that wait for Him.

There are two chains; the one dark and the other bright; the one pertaining to man, earth, and time, the other entirely of God, from heaven, and eternal; the one ending in eternal glory, the other in everlasting misery. The one chain is thus described by the apostolic word: "The wages of sin is death." The links are sin, death, judgment. Unto fallen and guilty man it is appointed

* *εἰς ἀθέτησιν ἀμαρτίας* (*v.* 26), for the abolishing of sin is a very forcible expression.

to die, and after that the judgment. This chain is the chain of the covenant of works, the relation between the links is that of man's doing and its consequence, according to divine justice and truth. It is impossible for this sequence to be broken. The day sin entered into the world, death also entered, and death as leading to judgment. Death is not, as many, alas ! deceive themselves, the transition from sin to glory : as sin leads to death, death leads to judgment. Inevitable is the connection between sin and judgment, and our death cannot sever this connection ; it is, on the contrary, the intervening link. In vain do men seek to put something between death and judgment. It is on this side of the grave that we must be taken out of the region of this dark chain.

For there is another chain. It came down from heaven. It originated in the eternal wisdom and love of God. It is of God from beginning to end. Jesus came ; this is the first link. Jesus died ; this is the second. Jesus comes again to receive us unto Himself ; this is the last. Instead of man, the Son of man, God's own Son ; instead of the death of the sinner, Christ's death ; and instead of judgment, the saints glorified together with Christ.

But the logic of this chain is not so apparent as of the first. Sin, death, judgment—this is a right sequence. But the incarnation of the Son of God

and the cross ; the sinless, perfect Son of man and death, seem to be rather contradictions than consequences. One single word explains it, but this word is a stumbling-block to many. It is *Substitution*. Jesus came to die as the substitute ; the just laid down His life for the unjust ; the Father laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And now, sin having been taken away by His one offering of Himself once for all, we look forward to His glorious return. The first time He appeared with reference to sin ; the second time He shall appear—apart from the work of atonement, for it is accomplished, and they who love His appearing shall then receive the inheritance. As death is the conclusion of our earthly life, and does not lead to a repetition of the same, but to judgment ; so by the death of Christ all that was connected with sin and atonement is finished, and now there is nothing before Him but His second coming. He shall come again in glory.

At the Lord's table we behold nothing but grace—not wages, but the gift of God ; gospel or glad tidings, righteousness instead of guilt, life instead of death, glory instead of judgment. Instead of looking back to Adam and transgression, we remember Christ and His obedience, *the* obedience, even His death ; instead of looking forward to judgment, we wait for the coming of the Lord, who shall give us then the full adoption

and inheritance, the redemption of the body and the glory.

If we were thoroughly fixed and rooted in this apostolic "once for all," we should have perfect peace and a lively hope of the glory of God. Here is our weakness, that we do not put all our confidence in Christ, in His one and only death once for all. Though we so often say, "Christ is all," yet we have some secret feeling that Christ is *not* all, and that the work is not quite complete. If Christ is all, then blessed be God! He came, He died, He ascended, He will return for us. As He died for us, so His return must be for our glory.

"Christ is all," the Lord's Supper says. Nothing can be added to this bread, or mixed with this cup. "Drink ye all of it;" the blessed Saviour includes the weakest believer, encouraging the bruised reed and the smoking flax. "The blood was shed for the remission of the sins of the many." The apostle uses almost the same expression as the prophet—He was once offered to bear the sins of many.

Now we rejoice in hope. Sin is removed, and therefore faith looks back and beholds the love of God in a crucified Saviour. Hope looks forward, and beholds the Lord bringing the crown and the inheritance. And though we also have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, we

know that Christ has abolished death, He has taken away its sting, it is to us no more a link in the dark chain of sin and judgment. We have been transplanted out of the kingdom of darkness, and whether we fall asleep before the Lord's return, or are still living on earth at His advent, to us there remains now only one thing to expect: Christ appearing the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation.

Our Lord on earth came as the Prophet; after His death, and by His blood, He entered into heaven to be our Priest, and at His second coming He shall appear as King in great majesty and glory.* He who on earth was without sin, who knew no sin, and yet was made by God to be sin for us,† shall appear unto His people waiting for His return, looking with joyful, though humble and contrite, hope to His return. For He comes unto salvation. The Coming One is the same Jesus who ascended; it is emphatically the *Saviour* who delivered us from the wrath to come.‡

* Rev. xix., xx.

† 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. viii. 3.

‡ Acts i. 11; 1 Thess. i. 10.

CHAPTER XXV.

‘LO, I COME.”

HEBREWS x. 1-7.

THE apostle has contrasted the high priest of the Levitical dispensation with our Lord. The one entered into the earthly, Christ into the heavenly sanctuary; the one with sacrifices which could not purge the conscience, Christ with His own blood, by which we are sanctified; the one entered every year, Christ once for all. From this sublime contrast the apostle now argues that the law itself, the whole Levitical dispensation, was not able to give perfect peace to the conscience, and access into the presence of God; for it is evident from the constantly-repeated sacrifices and offerings that the worshippers had never attained to the condition of true acceptance and sanctification—that they had never reached a point where further sacrifice was not needed. Hence the apostle says: “For” (referring to his demonstration of the perfection of the one offering, Hebrews ix.

24-28), "the law having a shadow* (only) of good things to come, that is, of the then future salvation, blessing and inheritance, and not the express image of the things (as we have now in Christ, who is the manifestation and the fulfilment, or body), can never with the same yearly sacrifices, which they offer regularly, make the comers thereunto perfect."

The prophetic Word supplied the description of the contrast and the fulfilment. It testified of the insufficiency of the sacrifices and offerings, and spoke of the self-sacrifice, the self-devotedness of the true servant of Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel. It is to this special aspect of Christ's offering that our attention is directed in this chapter.

He who was offered, offered Himself; in His sufferings He showed the greatest strength and most concentrated activity of self-surrender; and because thus He fulfilled the eternal will of God concerning salvation, He has perfected for ever by one offering them that are sanctified. And thus we are led back to the fundamental and central truth: Jesus is the Son of God. Obedience

* Shadow (σκιά) is put first emphatically; only a shadow or outline of the substantial and eternal blessings promised. A shadow has no substance, but brings before the mind the form of the body from which it is projected. The image itself (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα) is given to us in Christ; a full and permanent embodiment of the good things to come.

belongs to a servant ; concurrence and co-operation are the characteristics of a son. When we think of the eternal glory of the Only-begotten, and the sufferings and obedience of Jesus, it is the divine Sonship on which our minds rest, and in which we see the sacred identity of the Lord and the servant unbroken.

It is a characteristic feature of this epistle, that it shows forth most clearly and fully the glory of Jesus exalted at the right hand of God, while at the same time it enters more deeply than most portions of the inspired record into the consoling truth of our Lord's true humanity, of the reality of His temptations and struggles, of His faith, prayers, and tears, and of His perfect sympathy with us, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. Nowhere in Scripture do we meet with a representation of Jesus the Messiah in which His divine majesty, and His human compassion and sympathy, are so distinctly and yet harmoniously brought before us. It is for this reason, though there be many things hard to be understood in this epistle, it has always exerted a most powerful and consoling influence on the Christian, whose joy it is to confess with adoring love that Jesus is Lord, and to rest with peaceful assurance in the marvellous truth that the Lord, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth, is the man Christ Jesus ; " this same Jesus " of the peaceful

gospels,* that in the midst of the throne is the Lamb as it had been slain.

Jesus, the Messiah, the Son, by whom all worlds were made, and who is appointed Heir of all things, is now exalted high above all angels and powers; He who humbled Himself, and was obedient unto death, is for this very obedience enthroned at the right hand of God; in His humanity He has received a name above every name; angels and men adore Him, and in the heavenly sanctuary He is our royal Priest; He is the Son who abideth for ever, the Lord over His own house, the chosen people of God. It is on the divinity of our Lord that our faith and hope rest; on this rock ("thou art the Son of the living God") the Church is built. The apostle brings before us the divine glory of the exalted Messiah, asserting it in a tone of joyous triumph, and illustrating it by the most varied and abundant testimony of the ancient Scripture; he reviews all previous revelations and ordinances to exalt the Saviour; above all prophets He is the Son, the only adequate, comprehensive, and ultimate Revelation of God; above Moses, the servant, He is the Lord, the mediator of a better covenant; above Joshua, He is the only true and everlasting rest of God, in whom we also have rest here and a perfect Sabbatism hereafter; above Aaron, the true and royal

* Acts i. 11.

priest, who after the power of an endless life is our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary. In Him alone, and that because He is God, are all promises fulfilled, all types summed up, and all symbols substantiated. Nay, He excels them all; for His divine fulness could only be shadowed forth imperfectly even by God-appointed symbols, and by inspired prophecies. And beyond the territory of man Jesus is represented as the Mediator, by whom all worlds were created, and by whom they are still upheld; in Him, whom angels worship, both before the throne and in ministering unto the heirs of salvation, the counsels of God and the whole universe find their centre.*

If this view of Christ's glory, like the appearance of the exalted Saviour in the opening scene of the Apocalypse, is so bright and dazzling that it overwhelms even loving and trustful disciples, so that their souls fall prostrate before the Son of God, the same epistle unfolds to us the humanity of the Lord, and gives to us a picture so vivid and touching of His brotherhood, that not even the gospel of Luke leads us into so profound and consoling knowledge of the Son of man, the Friend of sinners, the Physician full of pity and tenderness. And while we see Jesus here taking upon Him our flesh and blood, enduring tempta-

* The original (Heb. i.) implies that the angels' ministry to us is an act of worship unto God.

tion, entering into all our difficulties, struggles, and sorrows; while here we have explained to us the reality of Christ's human nature, of His faith in God and dependence on Him, of His tears and conflict in Gethsemane, we are taught that He went through all these experiences in order that in His glory He may sympathize with us and succour us in all our trials; that as Man He regards now with an infinite compassion and tenderness all His disciples on earth; and that therefore, though with awe and trembling, because He is God, yet with perfect liberty and enlarged confidence, we may draw near the throne of grace, where Jesus, the God-man, is still our Brother as well as our Lord.

These two aspects, so marvellously and inseparably united, must always co-exist, if we are to have access unto God and communion with Him. The neglect of the doctrine of either the divinity or the humanity of the Lord Jesus is the source of all heresies, maladies, and infirmities which afflict Christendom. Unless Jesus is God, we have not seen the Father, we have not been reconciled to Him, we have not been brought nigh as His redeemed and accepted children. Nor can a soul-renewing influence be exercised except by the divine Lord, who can pour out the Holy Ghost. If Jesus is the Son of God, nothing need or can be added to His sacrifice, to His

intercession, to His soul-transforming and sanctifying power. And as the Hebrew believers, if they rightly understood Christ's divinity, were thereby emancipated from all the shadows and types of the Levitical dispensation, so the subsequent introduction of human and angelic intercessors, of a so-called repetition of the sacrifice, of priestly mediation, of supplemental merits, is rooted in a defective view of the divine glory of Christ's person and all-sufficient, because infinite, value of His work.

But equally essential is it to hold fast our faith in His true humanity. Emphasizing not too strongly, but in a onesided and untrue manner, the divinity of Jesus, men fancied that His perfection, His spotless purity, His majestic holiness, stood in the way of our coming to Him with confidence, and with that free and unrestrained trustfulness which alone enables us to pour out our whole heart. Jesus seemed so majestic and glorious, so high exalted above the heavens, so holy and spotless, that men forgot His infinite mercy and tenderness, and the inexhaustible fulness of His human sympathy, and imagined that some human sinful being, better than themselves, yet imperfect, ought to intervene as mediator between themselves and Jesus; that they fancied especially to find such a mediator in the Virgin Mary, whose womanly gentleness and compassion made

it easier for them to approach in their weakness and sinfulness. Oh, how little do such thoughts harmonize with the blessed gospel! How dishonouring are they both to the divinity and humanity of our Lord! This is the great mystery of godliness, that our Mediator is God, of infinite love and mercy; that He is man, perfect in His sympathy and tenderness. As if imperfect and sinful men, or any created and therefore limited angels, could ever fully know the human heart; as if finite compassion and love could ever fully fathom and heal our sorrow; as if any one but Jesus could unite perfect sympathy with the sinner, and the perfect aim and power to bring us into fellowship and harmony with God. Between Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Church, and the soul none can intervene. He alone knows what is in man; He alone loves us perfectly; He alone has the way to the heart, and power to say, "Let not your heart be troubled." Our sorrow, our sin, our need, lie too deep for human ministry.

Once, when He was still on earth, His mother Mary, whom we also in common with all generations of believers call blessed, ventured to interfere on behalf of the guests, and said, "They have no wine." But the same Lord, who as a child was subject unto Mary His mother, and as a son remembering her with gratitude and affection even on the cross, commended her to the beloved

disciple, recognizes here no mediatorial position or special claim on His affection and help. Here He does not call her mother. He does not acknowledge her maternal authority. The tone of His reply appears strange and severe: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" The evangelist John, who records this incident, was especially near the blessed virgin, and regarded her with peculiar veneration and affection. She had been committed to his care by his beloved Lord. What is the meaning of Christ's words, recorded by John? He who, even as a child, had said to Mary and to Joseph, "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and had thereby revealed to them His divine sonship and His exalted position above all men, returned with them to Nazareth, and in humility was subject to His parents, thus obeying the commandment of the Father who had sent Him. In Nazareth, as a child and youth, He doubtless always called Mary "mother," and always obeyed and honoured her. But now He had entered on His work. He had commenced His ministry, being filled with the Holy Ghost. At the marriage of Cana, Jesus appears as the Lord, as the true Bridegroom of the Church. Here He manifests His glory; here Jesus knows none but the Father, and the children whom God has given Him. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? He who

doeth the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The Lord shrinks back from Mary, because she brings her maternal authority and influence into a region to which it does not belong; she attempts to put herself by His side in the kingdom, where He is the only monarch. Jesus is Lord, and there is none in heaven or earth to share in any way or to any extent His mediatorial throne.

How plainly does this incident teach us that, highly favoured as Mary was in the kingdom of Christ, she is only one among myriads, a disciple of Jesus. Thus we find her mentioned in the Acts as one of the believers who united in prayer for the promised descent of the Spirit. In none of the epistles does she occur again. While we hear constantly of our Lord's ascension and exaltation, is there the slightest reference to *her* ascension? In the visions of the heavenly glory vouchsafed unto John, do we ever read of Mary as enthroned with or near the Lord—as holding any peculiar position among the angels and glorified saints? We read of angels and living beings, and elders and martyrs, and multitudes with white robes; but where do we read of the Virgin Mary, of a queen of heaven, of a merciful and indulgent intercessor, appealing to the filial affection of her son? No; Jesus said unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" How much more now in His exalta-

tion is He the one and only Lord who alone is the searcher of hearts, the consolation of Israel, the healer of the wounded spirit, the Head, from whom all blessings descend to His members. It is He who gives us the oil of gladness and strengthens us with the true wine. Mary recedes from her position as mother, and from the false attitude she had assumed; her sensitive heart understands Jesus immediately; she points as a true disciple to the one Lord and Saviour, and directing all eyes and hearts exclusively to Him, utters the great word, "Whatsoever He commandeth you, do." I think we honour and revere and love the Virgin Mary more than the Romanists in their false and unscriptural devotion. Her word, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," reveals to us her true greatness, her humility, her faith; her soul again magnified the Lord, and rejoiced in her Saviour. She points the whole Church away from herself to the Lord Jesus. She acknowledges Him to be the only Master. And so we rejoice in Him, the only Mediator, who is infinitely holy, infinitely merciful; of whose love all fatherly forethought and strength, all motherly tenderness, minuteness, inventive quickness, and persevering patience, all brotherly faithfulness and sympathy, are but feeble images; the man Christ Jesus, in whom is all manly and womanly perfection, the Lord who is from above, omniscient, omnipotent, all-good;

we have, we need no other mediator than Christ Jesus.

But in our passage the apostle brings before us another aspect of Christ's person and work. We are reminded of the truth that Jesus is the self-subsistent and eternal Word and Son of God. We need always to go back to that fundamental and most comforting truth of the divinity of our Lord. Only the Father which is in heaven can so reveal this mystery to our minds and hearts, that with adoring love and trust we look unto Jesus. We do not worship a deified man, but God incarnate; not a perfect man, who by reason of His complete and holy humanity was exalted into a heavenly position, but the Son of God, who came down from heaven, and returned into the glory which He had before the foundations of the world were laid. Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who lived in obedience to the Father, who suffered and died, and is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, came into the world, not merely sent by the Father, but by His free concurrence, accordance, and co-operation. In Bethlehem's manger the child born unto us is The Wonderful, The mighty God, The everlasting Father. The prophet of Galilee declares to his cotemporaries, "Before Abraham was I am." The grace which appeared in His death had its fountain in the everlasting love which the eternal Wisdom had to the sons

of men.* He is the Son of God from all eternity, and in that mysterious eternity before the creation of the world, in His pre-mundane glory, this mind was in the Son, that He would humble Himself, and take upon Himself the form of a servant, and obey the whole counsel of God concerning the redemption of fallen man. His whole life on earth, embracing His obedience and His death, His substitution for sinners, was His own voluntary resolve and act.

True, the Father sent Him; but such is the unity and harmony of the blessed Trinity, that it is equally true to say, the Son came. The love of Jesus, the sacrifice of Himself in our stead, the unspeakable humiliation of the Son of God, have their origin not in time but eternity, in the infinite, self-subsistent, co-equal Son of the Father. He took on Him our nature. By His own will He was made flesh. From all eternity He offered Himself to accomplish the divine will concerning our salvation, He must needs be God, to have the power of freely offering Himself; He must needs take upon Him our nature to fulfil that sacrifice. Only the Son of God could undertake the work of our redemption; only as man could He accomplish it.

It is for this reason that Scripture unveils to us the great mystery of the eternal covenant. It is

* Prov. viii.

not to gratify an unhallowed desire to look into things too lofty for our vision, but to show unto us the marvellous love of the eternal Son, and the true character and infinite merit of His obedience and death.

The counsel between the Father and the Son must ever remain a mystery of solemn and awful majesty. We think of eternity before creation, of that silent eternity before the word was uttered, "Let there be light;" before the angels sang together, and the morning stars shouted for joy, and faith hears even then the uncreated Word, which was with God, and was God, the voice of the Only-begotten responding to the Father's purpose, and saying, "Lo, I come." In this eternal region is the only sunshine, which is never clouded; here alone the foundation, which can never be moved.

'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands.'" "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life for the sheep." "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." "None shall pluck them out of My hand. I and the Father are one." What are all these consoling and precious assurances but declarations of that eternal concord between the Father and the Son, in which the Son undertook to do the salvation-will of God, comprising His incarnation, obedience, and death, on the one hand, and the Father exalting and crowning and

enriching Him as the Head of the Church, and the Heir of all things. Now Jesus sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied; and we also rejoice; Christ's joy remains in us, and our joy is full.

Three most practical truths follow from this revelation.

1. None but the Son of God could offer unto the Father a sacrifice to please Him, and to reconcile us unto Him in a perfect manner. The burnt-offerings and sin-offerings were ordained merely as shadows and temporary types of that one offering, the self-devotedness of the Son of God to accomplish all the will of God, the counsel of salvation. It is the divine and eternal offering of Himself unto the Father, in which the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus are rooted; it is the voluntary character of His advent and passion, and it is the divine dignity of the Mediator which render His work perfect—absolutely unique, with which nothing can be compared, and a repetition of which is impossible. Hence it is impossible to sever the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the doctrine of His expiatory sacrifice. The character of Christ's sufferings must be utterly misunderstood, when we do not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, who came to lay down His life. In the death of our Lord, the Father was pleased; this sin-offering was also a sacrifice

to God for a sweet-smelling savour Here was not merely punishment endured, but the doing of "God's will," the fulfilment of His eternal counsel, righteousness exalted, and divine love manifested in sufferings of infinite depth, and in the strength of perfect faith.

2. Rise from the river to its source, from the rays of light and love to the eternal origin and fount. You know the grace of the Lord Jesus, how He was poor on earth, and had not where to lay His head. Remember He who was poor had of His own free will *become* poor, though He was rich, the Lord of heaven and earth. You know the grace of the Lord Jesus, that He was born of a woman, and made under the law. Remember that it was Himself, of His own free will, and by His infinite power of love, who laid aside His glory, and emptied Himself. You remember His gentleness and meekness, His labour and toil, His unwearied zeal, and His undisturbed patience. He learned obedience; but remember it was the Son, co-equal with the Father, who of His own choice learned obedience. You see Him rejected and reviled, buffeted, smitten, spit upon, scourged, nailed to the cross. You say a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; remember also to say, strong and glorious Son of God, whom all the hosts of angels obey; who of thine own divine will and power bearest the sin of the world, and

offerest thyself by the eternal Spirit a ransom for thy brethren. See in the life, the obedience, the agony of Jesus, the expression of that free surrender of Himself and espousal of your cause, which was accomplished in eternity in His own all-glorious and infinite divinity. Beware lest you see in Him only the faith and obedience, the sufferings and death of the Son of man; see His eternal divinity shining through and sustaining all His humanity. Because His blood is the blood of the Son of God, shed freely according to the everlasting covenant, it cleanseth from all sin. Who can fathom the depth of such love, of such grace, of such sacrifice?

And lastly, this truth is revealed to us, not merely to establish our hearts in peace, and to fill us with adoring gratitude and joy, but here, marvellous to say, is held out to us a *model* which we are to imitate, a principle of life which we are to adopt. So wondrously are high mysteries and deep doctrines intertwined with daily duties and the transformation of our character, that the apostle Paul, when exhorting the Philippians to avoid strife and vainglory, and to brotherly love and helpfulness, ascends from our lowly earthly path unto this highest region of the eternal covenant: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his

own things, but every man also on the things of others." Then he proceeds in a sublime and profound transition: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (from all eternity): "who, being in the form of God, . . . made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Blessed apostle, who was always beholding in fervent adoration and love the image of that Lord Jesus, who appeared unto him as the Lord of glory and the Saviour of the lost. Paul found it easy to serve, to stoop, to suffer, to endure reproach and mockery, to be beaten and scourged, to be hated of his brethren, and to be suspected by his fellow-disciples, to bear the burden of all the churches, and the more vehemently he loved, to be repulsed with enmity, because he remembered that the Son of God loved him before the foundations of the world were laid. Remembering the dark origin of selfishness, of disobedience, of ambition, of pride, let us rise to *the celestial and eternal foundation of humility, obedience, love, self-denial, to Christ*; and as we owe all to Him who loved us and washed us from our sin in His own blood, let us be not merely debtors, but also followers of Him who came, not to do His own will and to be ministered

unto, who came to love and to serve, to give and to bless, to suffer and to die. *He loved me!* Oh, what a contrast! Let us then receive the love of Christ, and love with His love. One with Christ, let us present ourselves a living sacrifice unto the Father—I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL."

HEB. x. 7-10.

ALTHOUGH man is a finite and limited creature, yet eternity alone can satisfy his heart. We are not able to conceive of eternity, either that endless existence, which lies before us, or—to use language which, inadequate and almost self-contradictory as it is, is the only one at our command—the eternity which preceded time. And yet the human heart can only rest in the eternal love of God ; in a love without beginning, which has its source not in time, and which shall endure for evermore ; an ocean without shore, a fulness which cannot be exhausted. I must know, not merely that God loves me now, but that He will love me for ever ; and not merely that the future is boundless, but that the divine love is from all eternity, its own cause and origin. In Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, beheld by the Father as the Lamb slain from before the founda-

tion of the world, God has chosen us unto eternal life and glory. In Him we behold and possess the mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting; in Him we have the assurance that God loves us with an eternal love.*

This eternal character of the love of God in Christ Jesus is unfolded to us, especially in the writings of the apostles John and Paul, from different points of view, the one confirming and supplementing the other. The beloved disciple, brought up in the school of John the Baptist, who led him to the Saviour, seems, without any severe struggle or abrupt transition, to have found in Jesus the promised Messiah, and drawn by the gentle yet irresistible, the calm but heart-deep attraction of the Son of man, he leaned on His bosom : nearest to Him in human friendship and affection, he beheld with most solemn awe the glory of the Only-begotten. In his writings John, like an eagle soaring in loftiest and most radiant heights, looks down on the world, and presents to us truth in its divine and eternal aspect. Hence, he dwells on the contrast between the world and the Church, the world and the men out of the world, whom the Father gives unto the Son, the people who believe not, because they are not Christ's sheep, and the souls who, drawn by the Father, hear the Shepherd's voice; the con-

* 1 Peter i. 20; Eph. i. 4; Ps. ciii. 17; Jer. xxxi. 3.

trast between the world, which lieth in the wicked one, the realm of darkness, and the believers, who overcome the world, and finally reign with Christ over a subdued and renewed earth.

In no other portion of Scripture is the contrast described, and traced to its ultimate reason as well as to its final issue with such stern distinctness. We have on the one hand God, Christ, they who are of God, who are born of Him, who have the divine seed remaining in them, who are not of the world, who are Christ's sheep, for whom He prays, for whom He dies, who shall walk with Him in white, and inherit all things. On the other the world, men who are not of God, who are of their father the devil, and whose end is, that they are cast into the lake of fire. It is as if to him the history of the world, the process of development had ceased, he ascends to the ultimate manifestation of the essence of things, and to the primary origin in the counsel of God.*

The apostle Paul, in analogy with his own mental history, begins with man and ascends upwards. While John shows how the life which was with God from all eternity was made manifest, Paul describes how a sinful, guilty, condemned, yet self-righteous

* John is pre-eminently, as the ancient Church discerned, the theologian; he views all things theologically; that is, from the divine and eternal point. It is strange how an insipid latitudinarianism has pretended to have a special congeniality with this son of thunder.

man is brought by grace to find in Jehovah righteousness and life. He ascends from earth to heaven. Hence as a guide, especially for those who are seeking the way of acceptance and life, the apostle Paul is more helpful; he enters, with the sympathy and lucidity of a most intense personal experience, into the difficulties and struggles of our hearts. Now let us see how from the experimental point of view the apostle Paul arrives at the eternal character of the gospel.

Jesus appeared to him, and what the law could not give him—righteousness in which to stand before God, life wherewith to serve and enjoy God—he received as a free gift in Jesus. Old things thus passed away, and the covenant, the method, the dispensation in which he now stood, was *new*—new as contrasted with the law of Moses, the Levitical dispensation, the covenant of works made on mount Sinai. Yet on reflecting, it became obvious that this change, this setting aside of the old, this introduction of another and brighter light, before which the former faded; of another and substantial mediation, which caused the symbolical and typical to vanish, was no after-thought of God. It was new only in the sense that the law had come first; in reality it was the original, the primary thought, and the law came in only for a time, and to prepare, announce, and symbolize the gospel. The law is old, because it came first in

point of time ; the gospel is new, because it came second in point of time : but the law passes away, because its origin is in time ; whereas the gospel abideth, because its origin is not in time, but in eternity.

This thought is most frequently and fondly expressed by the apostle. He shows that the promise given to Abraham was before the giving of the law ; the covenant of grace preceded the covenant of works. But this priority again is based upon the essential and eternal priority of the dispensation or method of grace. The original and eternal plan of God is now manifested in the preaching of the gospel. The Scripture, as Paul personifies it, never meant anything but the gospel.* It always had its eye fixed on the eternal, free, and all-comprehensive grace of God through Christ Jesus. The law was given only as a temporary and parenthetical dispensation ; the *new* covenant is the *eternal* covenant—eternal in every sense of the word. It is ultimate ; it can never become old or antiquated. It possesses a vitality which must endure for ever. Nothing *more new* can supersede it. But the covenant of grace is eternal in another and more mysterious sense.

The apostle naturally contrasted the old dispensation and the new method of salvation by grace in Christ Jesus. The transition from Moses to

* Gal. iii. 8,

Abraham showed him at once the temporary character of the law. The unity of Scripture history, and of Scripture itself, revealed that the gospel was God's thought even from the very beginning. But his mind and our mind cannot stop there. All prophecy points to Messiah, to God becoming our Saviour, our Righteousness. This then was God's original and eternal thought, and thus prophecy and the fulfilment of prophecy are traced to the purpose of God, His eternal will and counsel. I remind you of such passages as these: "God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. . . . The mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." "The hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour."*

As the advent and work of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace, irrespective of works and merit, our adoption and glorification are rooted in the eternal counsel of God, so His own personal

* Eph. i. 4, 5-9; Titus i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 9, 10,

experience, both in his conversion and his subsequent life, force him in like manner into the region and atmosphere of eternity. He who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, obtained mercy. True, he had done it ignorantly in unbelief. But not merely was his ignorance wilful, and his unbelief culpable, but only the sovereign, free, and unmerited grace enlightened the ignorance and dispelled the unbelief; for, as he himself explains it, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." That is, faith and love were given and implanted by the Lord Himself. By grace was he saved through faith, and that *faith* not of himself, it was the gift of God. While this was to him a matter of experience and consciousness, the grace which thus visited him led still further to its origin. When the Lord *called* him, He said that Paul was a *chosen* vessel unto him; and so the apostle, looking back on this momentous crisis of his life, writes: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me." Hence he traces his conversion to the electing love of God, even as salvation is a free and perfect gift of divine righteousness and life. Thus he writes also to the Thessalonians, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came unto you not in word only, but also

in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

But look to the subsequent life of the newborn soul. In the manifold trials and sufferings, in the fluctuating and distressing conditions of our spiritual life, in the fierce and subtle temptations of pride and of despondency, what is the consolation, the encouragement, the cordial of the Christian? Is it not this: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose"? And again, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" And again, "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And again, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." Is not the election of God that ocean of love which surrounds our earthly Christian life as an island, and which we can never lose out of sight for any length of time? Is it not our ultimate refuge in our weakness, in our afflictions, in our trials? Thus we ascend to the eternal counsel of God, whether we consider the character of the gospel dispensation in its relation to the law, or the divine righteousness and life through faith in the crucified Saviour, or the work of grace in conversion, or the spiritual experience of the believer. All things are of

God. Infinite love from all eternity purposed to clothe us with divine and perfect righteousness, to renew us unto an incorruptible inheritance, and this through the gift and the self-devotedness of the Son.

Of the eternal counsel of God, Jesus crucified is the centre and manifestation. For, "Lo, I come," was the voice of the Son of God from all eternity. As the apostle had been speaking of Christ in this whole section, it cannot surprise us that he introduces (*v.* 5) Christ speaking, without specially saying so; nor can we wonder that a word of David is quoted as the word and self-testimony of the Lord; for in this whole epistle the fundamental and all-comprehensive meaning of the Holy Ghost in the prophetic word is everywhere referred to, without dwelling on the mediating person and circumstances, in connection with which the passage originally occurs. Hence the mind with which the son of Jesse, anointed by God to be king, enters on his royal calling, and which finds its expression in the 40th Psalm, is viewed here as the expression of the eternal mind of David's Lord, with which He entered into the world. He came to offer unto God that which sacrifice and burnt-offering could only shadow forth. In the sin-offering, death, due to the offerer, was transferred to the sacrifice; in the burnt-offering, one already accepted expressed his will to offer

himself wholly unto the will of God. How perfectly, and above all finite conception, was this twofold sacrifice fulfilled in Christ. The obedience which He rendered unto God was perfect; for it was the obedience of the Son of God, commencing in His eternal purpose, to do the salvation-will of the Father; the atonement, which He brought, was of infinite value and delight to the Father, for He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit.

The contrast is between the sacrifices and a person. These typical sacrifices the Psalmist, or rather Messiah, declares that God would not have; now He offers Himself. This is the one offering which is perfect, and in which God is pleased. The Father prepared a body for Him. All creation and providence centre in Christ.* The election of the Jewish nation and their whole history may be viewed as the body, the channel prepared by God, that through it Christ should come. But the chief meaning is, that the humanity of Christ was prepared of the Father, even as it was called into existence by the Holy Ghost and assumed by

* On the translation of the LXX., "A body hast Thou prepared me," for the original, "Mine ears hast Thou digged or bored for me," A. Pridham remarks: "The ancient translators, justly appreciating the expression as a metaphor of personal devotedness (compare Exod. xxi. 1-6), unwittingly furnished, in their very free version of this passage, the exactest expression of a truth far hidden from their sight. The Holy Ghost accordingly adopts it here as a just interpretation of His own prophetic words."

Himself. The original expression of the Psalmist, "Mine ears hast Thou bored," refers to the symbolical act by which a slave, who offered himself of his own accord to belong to his master, was set apart to willing obedience of his freely-chosen lord.

It points out the same fact, of which the prophets so frequently speak, that the Lord would come, the Divine One, sent by God, the perfect Servant of God; one whose ear the Lord had opened, who knew and loved and accomplished the will of God, though it implied sorrow, shame, agony, and death.* When the insufficiency of all sacrifices had been proved, when the powerlessness of the law had been made manifest, in the fulness of time the Sent One came to fulfil that eternal counsel of which the volume of the book—that is, the Scripture—had written. The original reference is doubtless to the Pentateuch, the roll of the law. Of this fundamental portion of Scripture it can be said emphatically, "In the roll of the book it is written of Me." It is with peculiar significance that Jesus said unto the Jews, "If ye believe not Moses' writings, how shall ye believe my words? Moses wrote of Me."† In these books of Scripture, containing the basis on which the whole subsequent superstructure rests, we have unfolded to us the plan of salvation, beginning with the most comprehensive and far-reaching

* Isaiah xli.-liii.

† John v.

promise of the Seed of the woman. Here we read of the Seed of Abraham, in whom all nations shall be blessed; the Shiloh, unto whom shall be the gathering of the nations; the Star of Jacob, whose shall be the dominion. In the books of Moses we have many types of Christ's sufferings and mediation. And as the books of Moses are evidently the commencement of a series of records of divine dealings with Israel, the volume of the book has a more extended meaning, and refers to the whole Scripture. The written Word of God is thus connected with God's eternal counsel, and the authority and inspiration of Scripture inseparably linked with the most hallowed and tender associations. Jesus, in all His acts and steps, in all His struggles and sufferings, not merely fulfilled the Scriptures, but, continually pondering them in His heart as the revealed counsel of His heavenly Father, and as the infallible testimony concerning Himself, His great purpose was to fulfil them. See how, after His resurrection, Jesus connects the counsel of God, the written Word, and the actual accomplishment.*

“In the volume of the Book it is written of Christ;” because Christ was set up from everlasting in the counsel of the ever-blessed Godhead. When we think of this, we see the connection between our salvation and the eternal purpose of

* Luke xxiv. 44-47.

God, the manifestation of God's glory, the Father's good pleasure, and the Saviour's reward and crown. We then begin to feel how much is implied in the simple truth that God is well pleased with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

From all eternity God, according to His good pleasure which He had purposed in Himself, chose us in Christ, that we should be to the praise of His glory.* Notice the expression, "good pleasure." It was God's eternal delight, this purpose of self-manifestation in grace; His counsel and election centre in the Son of His love, in the Only-begotten. When, according to this eternal counsel, and the Father's good pleasure, the Word was made flesh, the whole life of Jesus on earth was the manifestation of the eternal counsel, the expression of the Father's will, and of the Son's free concurrence, and therefore the object of Jehovah's infinite delight. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," said the voice from the highest glory of the man Christ Jesus, the Incarnate Word; and again, on the mount of transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him."

In this elect servant the Father had His delight, even as it was the meat of Jesus to do the will; that is, to carry out the salvation-purpose of the Father. Knowing the will of God, He

* Eph. i. 3-10, especially 5 and 9.

delighted in it. He never hesitated, He never swerved. Perfect was His love, His gentleness, His patience, His alacrity; perfect was His manifestation of the divine purpose of love. He went on from strength to strength. His was the path which shined more and more unto the perfect day—yes, day; for that was the perfect day of light inextinguishable, of love invincible, of holiness unsullied, when the Father hid His countenance from Jesus, and He, deserted of God, continued to love the Father that sent Him.

It is a merciful arrangement of the divine benevolence that we do not see and know our sufferings before they come, and that we are distracted from the anticipation of sorrow and pain by the varied duties, cares, and joyous gleams of our lives. But our blessed Lord knew from the commencement of His earthly ministry the sufferings that awaited Him. Never for a moment did He lose sight of the cup, the sword, the cross. Every source of agony was present to His mind. The enmity of the Pharisees, the ingratitude of His nation, the weakness of His disciples, the betrayal of Judas, were foreseen by Him from the beginning. He foretold not merely His rejection, but all the detail of His last days; all the fearful features of Israel's ingratitude, hate, cruelty, and contempt. Yet He continued faithful to the Father's will; He abode in the love which had chosen

sinner to be redeemed ; He who was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, was willing to lay down His life as a ransom for them ; He who was higher than the heavens, and needed no sacrifice for Himself, was willing to enter through His blood into the holy of holies. Perfect is the offering, because Christ's humanity is perfect, because in perfect liberty He laid down His life for the sheep.

When Jesus offered Himself unto the Father, and as our Substitute bore our sins in His own body (that same body which the Father had prepared for Him, as the channel of obedience), Jesus, although made a curse for us, was unto God a sweet-smelling savour, He who in the mysterious hour of darkness had cried, "My God," returns again to the full consciousness and enjoyment of that word "Father," which, in its eternal and infinite depth, belongs only to the Son. Knowing that the Father was *pleased*, and that the full love of the Father was resting on Him because He laid down His life for the sheep, Jesus gave up the Ghost. Then God raised and exalted Him, for it *pleased* the Father that all fulness should dwell in Christ. Now it is according to this same *good pleasure*, to this same eternal, free, infinite delight, that God calls and converts souls through the foolishness of preaching ; that He gives unto us the adoption of children, and the forgiveness of

sins : it is the Father's good pleasure to keep the little flock, and afterwards to give them the kingdom and the glory, together with Jesus. It is all in Jesus, for Jesus' sake, through Jesus ; it is all a most joyous, free, loving gift, flowing out of the innermost eternal depths of the Godhead ; and therefore God says so emphatically, " I, even I, am He that forgiveth thine iniquities ; I, even I, am thy God." God is pleased (that is, in the Scripture sense of the word), God is infinitely delighted with Christ, as the incarnate Son and as the Saviour of believers. Here only is perfect peace. It is not merely that we are forgiven, but that for Christ's sake we are forgiven, through the God-pleasing obedience ; it is not merely that we are acquitted and declared just, but that God has brought near His own righteousness, and clothed us with Christ Himself ; it is not merely that we are renewed, but that we who died together with Christ, are co-risen with Him, and that the God and Father of Jesus is in Him our God and our Father.

How marvellous and heavenly is this salvation by grace through faith ! Here all is gold, that is *divine*. We are found in *Christ*, and where is Christ found ? Where else but in the bosom of the Father ? We have nothing but what is divine, the righteousness, which is by faith in Christ and which is of God, and the life which Christ the risen Saviour has breathed into our hearts. And all

this, and we in all this, are a joy to God. Lo, I come! was the voice of eternal filial love and obedience. How precious are we to the Father—the fruit of Christ's obedience, of that which for ever is most precious and fragrant unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is there any believer who has received the pardon of sin in Christ, and who yet goes doubting, mourning with a dull conscience, and with a heart that is not filled with the sweetness of God's peace? You cannot forgive yourself; you cannot forget your past; you cannot overlook your constant sins and failures, or cease to mourn over your indwelling corruption? By a strange duality there is in your soul an elder son, who does not understand why the prodigal should be arrayed with the best robe, and that now only the voice of melody and rejoicing should be heard? Do you not know that your frequent failures and falls do not hinder His love, that His peace is ever in you, though you are not always consciously in His peace? In Him as your representative and head the Father is pleased. God calls you no longer forsaken and desolate, but Hephzi-bah and Beulah. And when you behold this eternal, never-varying love of God which is in Christ Jesus; that love which was before time; that love which gave up the Son; that love which shall keep you for ever; when you behold the love of Jesus, combining all

that is shadowed forth in the love of friend, of brother, of mother, of husband; that love which bore your sin on the cross, which bears you now on His High-priestly heart in heaven, which looks on you with sweet faithfulness and pity after you denied Him, then, though sin appear more loathsome and bitter, rest and rejoice in Christ, abide in the sanctuary, whither you have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus. He is ever the same. There, where we doubt Him most, He is, if I may so say, strongest. "We doubt not His all-wisdom or His all-might. That He is all-love is difficult to believe when we feel our grievous sin." Yet is this His great (I had well-nigh said His only) grief with us, that we do not always run to Him with our burden, our unbelief, our many stains and falls. The only punishment Jesus imposeth upon sinning believers is, that they humble themselves to receive His love, and to be beautified with His salvation; He is not willing that they should remain in the gloomy night, but should return to the light of His countenance. Let all who mourn in Zion, turn constantly from the misery they feel, to the blessedness they trust in; from the sight of self, fragmentary and sinful, to the sight of Jesus, in whom we are holy and complete. While you say, I am vile, and abhor myself, say in meekness and faith, God delights in Jesus; God delights in me.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR PERFECTION.

HEBREWS x. 5-18.

A GAIN we look to heaven, and behold Jesus seated at the right hand of God ; and again with adoring joy we say, " He hath perfected for ever by the one offering all that are sanctified." He who said, " Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of Me," is now seated on the throne of God. His very attitude proves that the work is finished. Fulfilled are the types, imperfect and needing constant repetition, and never bringing true purification and access unto God. The Aarònic high priest stood before the altar to repeat the same sacrifices, which could not take away sins. Christ has taken away and abolished sin, and at the right hand of God only one thing is before Him—His second advent in glory and power. He is now waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.*

* " From henceforth " might also be translated " for the rest," or " besides." Thus Kurtz views it (comparing Eph. vi. 10 ; Phil. iii. 1, 4, 8 ; 1 Thess. iv. 1 ; 2 Thess. iii. 1) : Christ has finished the

As under the Levitical dispensation, with its constantly-repeated sacrifices, and the yearly entrance of the high priest, there was no true, real, and final remission of sin, so now, since Christ is seated in heaven, the apostle argues, it follows that there is no more remembrance of sin. The Holy Ghost Himself witnessed by the prophet Jeremiah, that the new covenant was connected with complete and eternal forgiveness of sin. If so, there can be no more offering for sin. The characteristic feature of the New Testament standing of believers is, that they are free from sin in the sight of God, and that always and for ever. "No more remembrance of sin;" because Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

This is our sanctification; this is our standing before God. The sacrifice of Christ is perfect; it was based upon the eternal will of the Godhead. The Son said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will;" and in the eternal Spirit He offered Himself, thus fulfilling the salvation-will of God. The sacrifice, flowing out of eternal and infinite love, possesses absolute perfection, never-ceasing efficacy. And

work of redemption. What is still wanting—the subjugation of all enemies—He can await quietly till God fulfills the promise. Christ is represented as sitting on the throne for ever (unless "for ever" is taken in connection with the One sacrifice for sins), and yet we believe that Christ will come to establish His kingdom on earth. Kurtz remarks that in His second advent the Lord comes on and with the throne of God, in His divine glory and power.

by this one offering we are set apart unto God. "Jehovah our Righteousness" is the name by which we call the Lord. In the Lord Christ are we ever before the Father, and in the light and perfection of Christ the Father regards us. Thus, although sins constantly interrupt our communion and our enjoyment of God's favour, nothing can interrupt our position before God, or the representative position of Christ, the Advocate with the Father. Our righteousness is unchangeable as it is perfect; it, or rather He, is always before the Father, and for us, and the Father Himself always loves us. Access to God is always open; the sin-laden and defiled child finds always the Father and the interceding Lord. Oh, it requires much humility, and it makes the heart bleed in great sorrow and contrition, to believe that while we sin and forget God, the throne remains unchanged—the throne of grace; that the love of the Father and of the Son never varies; that our Righteousness and Perfection in the once offered Victim remain always the same; that He loves us with an everlasting love; that He hath redeemed us with an everlasting redemption; that He remembers our sins no more; and that we are always before Him in Christ Jesus. Believers in Jesus Christ rest in the eternal love of God. "It is good to be here." Let us in the light of our chapter dwell again on this high and comforting truth.

True, the Son of God came in the fulness of time; in these last times the Lamb without blemish and without spot was manifest, and was crucified; but He was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.

It was in time that we heard the call of the Gospel, that we trusted in Jesus, and received the adoption of sons; but the Father called us according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Our salvation is of God, of the Father, who chose us before the beginning of time; and of the eternal Son, who, in the deep counsel of the ever-blessed Trinity, undertook to redeem us and to bring us unto glory; and of the Spirit, who in the same eternal love was appointed to enlighten, quicken, and renew the elect unto the blessedness of the everlasting inheritance.

This eternal, absolute, free, and unchanging love is revealed and given to us in the Lord Jesus, who by one offering has perfected for ever all who believe in His name. By His death He has separated us from our guilt and death, and brought us unto God. He has sanctified Himself for us, and us in Him.* Believers have been sanctified and presented unblamable before the Father in the person of the Lord Jesus. The Father's good

* John xvii. 19.

pleasure or delight rests now on the people for whom Jesus died.

Thus God is always beholding us in Christ, and with eternal love. He beholds neither iniquity in Jacob, nor doth He see perverseness in Israel; although we stand before Him in the brightness of the all-revealing light, He sees us clothed with white garments, and cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. And although we are constantly failing and falling, yet doth He behold our faith as never failing, and ourselves as firm as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but standeth fast for ever. With never-changing fervency and tenderness of love God beholds us chosen, redeemed, sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Perfection is now given to all who believe. God Himself is our salvation. Jehovah Himself is our righteousness. Christ's inheritance is our inheritance. The source is eternal love, self-moved, infinite, ocean without shore; the channel is free abounding grace, the gift is eternal life, even life by the Holy Ghost in oneness with Jesus; the foundation is the obedience of Christ, eternal in its origin, infinite in its value, and unspeakably God-pleasing in its character. How willing are we to forsake our own thoughts, to give up our own righteousness, to forget our works and feelings, and to stand still, in awe and joyous adoration beholding Jehovah bringing near His salvation

and His righteousness! "Of God are we in Christ Jesus, whom God hath made for us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

But let me remind you, believers, and let me testify to you who are yet without the dear Lord, how this eternal love came to us. In Jesus, the Friend of sinners, the Good Shepherd, the light of eternity shone with gentle and healing rays into our hearts. The death of Jesus on the cross was the open page, in which we read the eternal love, the holy and yet gracious purpose of the Father. The voice which called the heavy-laden and weary ones attracted us, and He gave us rest, and thus the eternal counsel was revealed to us as babes. Stooping to our lowest need, and declaring to us the forgiveness of sins, Jesus lifted us up even unto the Father's house, and assured us of mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus is that sweet bosom of eternal love, where poor and needy sinners can rest; and in the wounds of Jesus, in His blood, we read our eternal election, and the infinite love of God to us.

And of this we have assurance in the Scripture. Will not God's written Word suffice? Behold, Jesus Himself lived and died to fulfill what was written; and it was to His mind the same thing

to say, that the Scriptures are fulfilled, and that the eternal will of God is accomplished. He not merely meditated on the written Word of God with constant delight, He not merely used the Scripture as His one unfailing weapon against the adversary ; but He fulfilled the Scripture, because in the volume of the book God's eternal will is written. He went up to Jerusalem to be crucified in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. He did not ask of the Father to send Him legions of angels ; for how then would the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? "The things that are written concerning Me must be accomplished." See then how Jesus regarded the Scripture as the perfect, most reliable, all-sufficient expression of *God's eternal and secret will*. What unbelief then is it on our part not to recognize in the written Word the very mind and will of God ! No voice from heaven, no vision, no authority can be compared with the volume of the book which Christ came to fulfill by His death and resurrection. If we could have heard the counsel of eternity, the word of the Father to the Son, ere time began, we could have no greater certainty than now, when we listen to Scripture, the echo in time of the counsel in eternity. God Himself is here speaking ; the word proceedeth out of His mouth.

Now as Christ said, "In the volume of the book

it is written of Me," to come, to live, to die, to rise, so say, "In the volume of the book it is written of *me*: Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help;" and again; "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions;" and again, "Fear not: I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art mine;" and again, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and again, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Thus between Jesus and believers there is a strong and tender tie which binds them to the Scripture. Jesus believed and fulfilled the written Word. According to that written Word, He obeyed and suffered; according to that written Word, He hoped and looked forward to His reward and exaltation. The last word uttered by the eternal Word on the cross was from the Scripture. What a sure and blessed word of prophecy is ours! It came from God; it was fulfilled by Jesus, and sealed with His own blood; it comes to us through the channel of Christ Himself; of Christ's faith, of Christ's prayers, of Christ's inmost spiritual heart-life, of Christ's broken body. We can rely on all its promises; our faith builds on the very words of the almighty and ever-blessed God; and in this also are we conformed to the image of His dear Son.

And this very aspect of truth, which has occupied us of late, the eternal counsel, is revealed to us in Scripture that we may have the more abundant assurance of the divinity of this written Word. Where but in Scripture do we breathe the atmosphere of eternity? Where but here is God revealed? Oh, with what majesty, and yet with what condescending familiarity, does God reveal Himself, and unfold to us His thoughts and His ways! God reveals His infinite majesty, His ineffable holiness, His sovereign glory, that the creature may be filled with humility, and veiling his face, adore with fear and trembling. God reveals His truth and justice, His goodness and faithfulness, His wrath and jealousy, that the sinner may confess in contrition his guilt, and cry out of the depths. But Jehovah delights in comforting His people, and speaking to the broken and wounded heart of Jerusalem. He desires truth in the hidden part, and therefore, after convincing us of our sin and wretchedness, He reveals His overwhelming and abounding grace, the fulness of His love, the grandeur of His salvation, that the poor and afflicted ones may go forth with perfect trust, with joyous self-surrender, to meet the Bridegroom.

How touching is the sweetness of God! Clouds and darkness are round about His throne, and He rebukes Israel, and testifies to them

of their hardness and iniquity ; but again and again the deepest thought of God—that is, salvation—and the never-changing method of God—that is, mercy—burst forth, and with motherly tenderness and comforting iteration, He says again and again, Fear not, I am the Saviour. And then He takes them into His confidence, He unveils to them His purpose, He speaks to them of His cherished plans, of that future glory which will be His joy and their blessedness. Behold, He says, where and how I have prepared all for you. Behold, my servant ! I have made Him a leader and commander to the people. He tells us of that counsel between Himself and the Lord the Messiah, and how David's Son is to suffer and to die, and how God is to raise and reward Him, and to make Him Israel's everlasting glory and the light of the Gentiles. And then the soul is lifted above time, and its own thoughts, works, merit, and strength, into the eternal and infinite love, the salvation of God, the joy of God.

And in Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, the message is still more perfect, more simple ; He speaks with the utmost plainness, without parable ; His words are with such condescension, transparency, homeliness, and sweetness, that the heart is perfectly satisfied, and all that is within us magnifies the Lord. " I came from the Father, and again I go to the Father." This is all. I came, according

to eternal love, to die for you ; I go again to the Father, that this eternal love may be yours for evermore.

The soul responds with the disciples, "Now speakest thou plainly." The eye is opened to behold Him, ascended to His God and to our God, to His Father and to our Father. We know now that the love with which the Father loved Jesus embraces us also, and folds us with everlasting safety and infinite tenderness. And the highest mystery is unveiled : "I in them, and thou in Me. I am the Vine, my Father is the Husbandman, ye are the branches."

The word "perfected" falls with a strange sound **on** those who are experiencing daily their sad imperfections. But the Christian is a strange paradox. We are unknown, yet well known ; chastened, yet not killed ; dying, and, behold, we live ; poor, yet making many rich ; having nothing, yet possessing all things. Let me speak to you then of this two-fold aspect of the Christian. You may be caught up into the third heaven, and yet the abundance of this revelation will not burn up the dross that is within you, or kill the old man, the flesh which warreth against the Spirit. On the contrary, there is the danger imminent and great, as there was to the apostle Paul, lest you be exalted above measure, and dream of victory and enjoyment while you are still on the battle-field, and called to fight

the good fight of faith, to crucify every day the old man, and to have no confidence, still less complacency, in the flesh. The Psalms of David the son of Jesse are not yet ended; the Solomon period of peace and glory has not yet come. A Christian is known by his difficulties, struggles, conflicts, tears, groans, as well as by his thanksgiving and joy. We have died once in Christ, and in Christ are accepted and perfect; but our old nature is not dead, the flesh in us is not annihilated, there is still within us that which has no pleasure in the will and ways of God. Painful this struggle will ever be, though God is with us, and our joy is greater than our pain. And thus while our soul is rooted in God, in endless and changeless love, while we dwell in God, in the secret place of the Most High, and have by Christ been taken out of our own misery and wretchedness into the home and sanctuary above; yet are we kept in great humility, self-abasement, watching, and painfulness. We have in us the death of Adam, and we have in us the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By the one we are broken and tormented through sin, and darkness, and sluggishness, and earthliness, and gloom; by Christ we are raised, and strengthened, and comforted. We sin, we fall, we carry about with us a mind resisting God's will, criticising it, and rebelling; and we shall experience to the very last breath we draw on earth, that there is a conflict.

and that we must strive and suffer in order to be faithful unto death.

Hear how at the end of his journey the apostle says of himself, not that he was, but that he *is*, chief of sinners. Is he a saint? He calls himself less than the least of God's saints. Is he an apostle? he adds, I am not meet to be an apostle. So we confess daily our sin and our sins, and condemn ourselves whenever we appear before God; yet are we perfect in Christ Jesus. Deeper than all our grief is the melody of the heart, and always can we rejoice in God. And in this song of praise, in this joyous melody, is our deepest humility; for the new song says nothing else but "grace, grace." His love is always resting on us, though He is grieved at our falls, and has to hide His countenance and to chasten us; yet does He love us all the time. Even while we are forgetting and forsaking Him, His motherly pity and forethought prepare our welcome, while His priestly intercession keeps our faith from failing. Nay, His love has ordered it, that even our sins and backslidings should lose us no time; for He deepens His work in us, and through the bitter experience of transgressions and of our own weakness leads us to a greater sense of His love and to greater strength of obedience.

And you, dear Christian, if you can believe this, will find that it will make sin very bitter to you,

and yourself meek and quiet like a weaned child, and that you will wonder how such a one as you can be loved by God at *any* time, and at *all* times, without change and wavering. Then will your heart fear and be enlarged; you will be amazed how God has kept you, how Jesus has prayed for you, how the Holy Ghost has restored and comforted you for so many years, through so many days and weeks of your neglect, and coldness, and sin, and disobedience. You will be ashamed; you will not think of saying, your dross is consumed, and that you see nothing in yourself, but delight in Jesus; you will say, Thy grace, Lord Jesus, is sufficient for me! The robes are white; but it is because He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Unto you also I lift up my voice in the love and compassion of my Lord; unto you who are still in the horrible pit and in the miry clay, who know not the royal clemency of the Sovereign God, eternal, infinite love to the sinner; nor Jesus, who became the sinner's Saviour and Brother, by taking upon Him our nature, and by dying as our Substitute, our Mother, bringing us forth by His soul-travail and agony on the cross. What a multitude of sicknesses, sorrows, fears, and evils lie upon you, and the remedy is near. There is forgiveness for sin, there is deliverance from death, there is renewal for the heart, there is the living God for the sinner

in time and eternity. It is near you ; the Word is in your mouth ; God's Word on which you can rely. Behold Jesus ! saith God, He who came to do my will, to fulfill my counsel for the sinner's salvation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE.

HEBREWS x. 19-25.

THE apostle's great argument is concluded, and the result is placed before us in a very short summary. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way; and we have in the heavenly sanctuary a great Priest over the house of God. All difficulties have been removed, perfectly and for ever. We have access; and He who is the way is also the end of the way; He is even now our great Priest, interceding for us, and our all-sufficient Mediator, providing us with every needful help.

On this foundation rests a threefold exhortation.

1. Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith. 2. Let us hold fast the profession of hope without wavering. 3. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, labouring and waiting together, and

helping one another* in the unity of brethren. Faith, hope, and love—this is the threefold result of Christ's entrance into heaven, spiritually discerned. A believing, hoping, and loving attitude of heart corresponds to the new covenant revelation of divine grace.

"Brethren," the apostle here significantly calls believers. He does not mean so much "his brethren;" but, including himself, he looks unto the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are sanctified. For, as he taught before, He who sanctified and they who are sanctified are of one; for which reason He took upon Him flesh and blood, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Thus we who believe stand before the Father.

The eternal election-love of the Father in Christ; the present and everlasting delight of the Father in the accomplished sacrifice, and in the representative position of the Saviour; the perfect High Priestly mediation of the Lord, who remembers His earthly experience, sorrow, and temptation—these are now the bright and yet peaceful heights to which we lift our eyes. And we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; for the Holy Ghost witnesses,† that there is no

* It would lead too far from the scope of the passage to enter into the connection subsisting between these three gifts of grace. Suffice it to remind the reader of their frequent conjunction in Scripture. Col. i. 4, 5; 1 Thess. i. 3; 1 Cor. xiii. 13; 1 Peter i.

† The expression *μαρτυρεῖ δὲ ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον* is very im-

more offering for sin, for the very reason, that God, on account of the one offering of Christ, will remember our sins no more. (*vv. 15-18.*)

There is now no barrier; we have a free and unfettered right of access.* We are not as Israel of old; not even as the Levites, who were excluded from the Holiest; not even like Aaron, who only once a year entered, and that in darkness, and for a few moments; unto us is given boldness, right, permission, to enter into the presence of God; for the blood of Jesus Christ, by which He entered Himself, opened the door to us also. Jesus is both the way and the door, even as He is also the end of the way; and inside the door we

portant. It is in harmony with the teaching of our blessed Lord in the Gospel of John, and with the Pauline teaching in Rom. viii. and 1 Cor. ii. It brings before us the following important and comforting truths:

1. The personality of the Holy Ghost, who searcheth the deep things of God, of the Father, and of the Son.

2. The relation subsisting between the Scripture and the Spirit. The *words* of Scripture are the testimony of the Spirit.

3. The Spirit witnesses to the individual believer in and by the Scripture.

4. The gracious object of the Holy Ghost is to show us our perfection in Christ Jesus.

Let us ever hold fast in a living and experimental faith the doctrine of the Divine Authority and inspiration of Scripture, and never be disturbed by high-sounding phrases of liberty and Spirit; for only where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty, and the Spirit is with and in the *written Word*.

* It is evident that the expression *παρρησία* must be understood here objectively, not subjectively, else the subsequent exhortation would be unmeaning.

are brought again into His gracious presence. That veil which hid the Holiest, which on the day of crucifixion "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom,"* symbolized the flesh of Christ. It was in order to die that the Son of God took part of flesh and blood.† The humanity in which the glory of the Only-begotten was revealed was, in its aspect of weakness and before His suffering of death, also a veil, separating Him as Son of Man and our Representative, as well as us, from the holy of holies. But when He tasted death for us, the veil was rent, and then Jesus with His own blood entered into the heavenly sanctuary, leaving an open way of access unto all believers. This is the new and living way consecrated by Christ. It is called new,‡ for before the death of our Lord no believer and worshipper was able to enter thus into the presence of the Most High. This "perfection," which pertains to the conscience, this absolute confidence, this acceptance in the Beloved, this standing in Christ, belongs to the new covenant, though grace prepared and kept the ancient believers under its safe and sheltering wings. The way is called new, because the efficacy and strength of Christ's atonement is ever the same. As the poet says, not so much by the power of imagination, as of faith, "dear *dying*

* Matt. xxvii. 51.

† Heb. ii. 14.

‡ *πρόσφατος*; literally, freshly slain, means also accessible.

Lamb;" as Luther often said, "It seems but yesterday that Jesus died on the cross."

It is called a living way, because all that symbolizes Christ must be represented as possessing vitality. Thus we read of Him as the living stone, and of the temple built on Him as growing. Thus He speaks of Himself as living bread, because He gives and sustains life to all His people. Christ is the living way, for He gives life and strength to walk by Him to the Father. Christ actually brings us, in repentance, trust, and soul-renewal, into the presence of God. Christ is all, and the sinner is really and truly transplanted out of the kingdom of sin, guilt, and death into the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and life.

But the second privilege, on which the apostle founds the exhortation is, that Jesus is not merely the way, but the end of the way, a living Saviour within the veil; the great, the all-glorious Priest,* continuing in the heavenly sanctuary without intermission His priestly functions, interceding for His people, and bringing each of us individually, with our various need, infirmity, and sorrow, before the Father. He is the great Priest over the house of God. By the house of God believers are meant.† Christ, as the Son, the Only-be-

* Thus in Heb. iv. 14 Christ is called great High Priest.

† Heb. iii. 6.

gotten of the Father, and the First-born among many brethren, is over His own house. What a consoling and encouraging thought is this, that on the throne of God is Jesus, Head of the House, and Head as Priest—merciful, faithful, sympathising, Guardian and Lord, Brother and Friend; nay more, One with the people, for whom He intercedes. And as Christ and the Church are viewed as the One House, Habitation, and Temple, so we know there is yet a future manifestation of the “place” which He is preparing for us. He is gathering now a congregation in the holy of holies; He is building now a spiritual and heavenly temple; and when the building is complete, then will be made manifest the threefold meaning of the tabernacle—a heavenly locality—Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and Christ and the Church, the tabernacle of God. *

Having thus received, through Christ’s sacrifice and Christ’s present priesthood boldness, a full right of access into the holy of holies, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. “The term ‘draw near,’ in English, reads as a mere general term, but as addressed to the Hebrews it has peculiar significance. It is the term which is applied to the approach of a priest drawing near

* Compare Matt. xvi. 18; Acts iv. 11; 1 Cor. iii. 11; Eph. ii. 19; Rev. xxi. 22.

to offer sacrifice. The privilege is right of access unto God, the duty is that of approach; and no man values the right of access who does not desire to approach. There can be nothing which really satisfies the heart of any man in being told that he is at liberty to approach God, if he has no inclination to approach unto God." *

We can only approach with our heart, and by faith, which has its seat in the heart; with a heart which is in earnest, true, and purposeful in this very work of approach. What is meant by a true heart? Sincerity towards God is not the natural attribute of our heart. On the contrary, the heart is exceedingly deceitful with regard to God and to divine things. It requires divine grace to give the heart sincerity and unity of purpose. Only by grace can we say, I will seek Thee with my whole heart. Only a whole heart is true.

God desireth truth in the inward part. A true heart is a heart which accepts the testimony of God, which distrusts itself, which believes God's Word, declaring our sin, guilt, and helplessness, and which responds simply, and without reservation, humbly and joyfully to the divine gospel of the gift of God, eternal life through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. A true heart is a heart purified by trust in Jesus. A true heart is

* Dr. John Duncan, *Sermons*, p. 395.

a heart which desires to be with God and to live unto Him. Thus, while we *desire* this "truth," and say,

"Oh for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free!"

believing in Jesus, we *possess* the true heart,

"A heart that always feels the blood,
So freely shed for me."

A true heart rests in the mercy of God, and allows God to be all its righteousness and strength. It leaves itself to the heavenly Father, to the Bridegroom, and to the Spirit, to make it an abode of their glory, and to work in it of their good pleasure. A true heart is never pleased with itself, but is at peace, content that Jesus shall be all.

What is meant by full assurance of faith? Nothing else but faith in full, vigorous, healthy exercise. Faith in what? Not faith in our having faith, in our being accepted; but faith that we have a right of access, that Jesus is the living way, and that He is the High Priest in the holy of holies. The object of faith, of the weakest and smallest spark of faith, as much as of faith in plenitude or full assurance, is not ourselves, but Christ in His person and work. That which I am to be fully assured about, on which my faith is to rest clearly and firmly is Christ, and what He

is, and has done for sinners. Hence when timid hearts say, I cannot draw near with full assurance of faith, because I do not know that I have truly taken hold of Christ, the answer is, You are to draw near with full assurance of faith in Christ. It is not, "Seeing therefore we have evidence that we have been truly converted and renewed, let us in full confidence of our possessing true faith draw near; but seeing that we have received right of access by the blood of Christ, and that He is High Priest over God's house, let us exercise full trust in His glorious person and His finished work." Christ alone is the object of faith from beginning to end. Of *Him* we are to be perfectly sure, and then trust ourselves to this firm foundation. "We are called to exercise faith, but we are not called to look *in* on faith as a condition; we are called to exercise faith in looking *out* on the unmixed promise of God, which yet can be received only by believing." Therefore the apostle says at the end of his life, "I know *whom* I have believed." From his conversion to his last moment he trusted as a poor sinner in Jesus. Clearly and vividly as his conversion must have stood before his mind, indelible as must have been the impression of the heavenly vision, yet he was never tempted to substitute the reminiscence of grace received for the personal and loving Saviour, for the new and living way by which we constantly come to God.

Hence when the disciples saw Jesus' hands and feet they rejoiced, for all doubt was removed.*

The eye does not see itself; faith is not to stand on itself; your full assurance is to be that Christ's blood is precious, and that He has entered as the forerunner. Then you are at peace. Faith means trust, reliance, confidence, leaning. There is no other worthy of trust, none else reliable but Jesus. But if you wish to have an additional object of faith in your own progress and spirituality, you are, like Peter, looking away from Jesus unto the unstable sea.

Nor have I any other proof of my faith's genuineness yesterday, but my exercising faith

* "In primitive times an apostle could take for granted of a whole church that they all trusted. For, in writing to the Ephesians, does Paul make a *single allusion to their unbelief?* or does he employ a single exhortation in the way of persuasion to believe? or, from beginning to end of his epistle, does he hint at such a thing as prevailing distrust? No; in those days Christian men no more thought of refusing to trust in the Saviour than of denying the Word of truth. But now, is it not a frequent case that a man shall go by a Christian name, and practise Christian duties, and receive Christian privileges for years together, while he is so far from trusting in Christ with the confidence of faith, that he shall not only confess himself destitute of trust, but shall often express a fear lest full trust and confidence were an unwarranted and dangerous presumption? *How strange this would have sounded in the apostles' time*, when to trust in Christ, and to trust fully and for all salvation, *was the very first exercise* to which they called those who were awakened to seek in earnest for eternal life, and received the record of God concerning the way. The remarkable trust of the first Christians gave a perfection to their character *we now seldom perceive.*"

this moment. It is an ever-present tense, "He that believeth hath eternal life."

But, alas! some who speak of not being sure of salvation, and wish to be persuaded not so much into assurance as comfort, have most likely never had any dealings with God. They wish deliverance from sorrow and punishment. They would like not so much to be brought nigh to God, but rather to have a title-deed, promising that they are and must be unfailingly saved! This would be salvation without God. This be far from us. God is our salvation. Our souls thirst for the living God. We draw near in full assurance of faith; for Jesus died and rose again, and sitteth at the right hand of God: *we trust and are safe.* Nay, while we are afraid, like the Psalmist, we will put our trust in Him. The feet may tremble, but the rock on which they are set standeth firm and immovable. Be not discouraged that you need the constant exercise of faith, as if this argued that you are not already accepted. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have *access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.*"

The exercise of faith alone keeps the heart true. When we behold Jesus as the way and the priest, there is no guile in our spirit.* Thus have our hearts been sprinkled from an evil conscience; we have

* Compare Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

been freed from the sense of condemnation and guilt; and we have been set apart to the service of God; for as the priests were set apart by blood and water, so have our persons,* body and soul, been washed by the virtue and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, who applied to us the atonement. This is signified and sealed to us in baptism; and the emphatic mention of the *body* (v. 22) reminds us that the whole of our present life, with all its activities and energies, is to be a life of faith and heavenly-mindedness. The body belongs even now to Christ; and of this our personal sanctification—body, soul, and spirit—we have the emblem and seal in baptism, in which we have also the pledge of the resurrection of the body. There *is* "pure, clean water." Not the water which putteth away the filth of the flesh, but the Spirit of God, who alone sanctifies by the blood of Christ.†

Thus in the exercise of full confiding faith, in sincerity of heart, and in conscious separation of our whole persons unto God, let us draw near to the Father, who loves us, and to Jesus our great Priest, faithful and compassionate.

2. We are exhorted to hold fast the profession

* Rom. xii. 1.

† The apostle refers to the inward and to the outward purification as facts accomplished once for all. This is evident from the whole scope of these chapters, and from the participles perfect. A Jew who came to faith in Jesus, and was baptized, was transplanted into the kingdom of grace with body, soul, and spirit, separated inwardly and outwardly to the life and service of Christ.

of our hope without wavering. Before the first advent believers looked forward in faith and hope to the good things to come. Believing the promise, they expected in hope the glory of Messiah's reign. With us this unity of faith and hope is substantially the same; but it appears now in a twofold manner. Faith rests on the past, the accomplished work of Jesus; hope looks to the future, the return of our Saviour. And the more we realize Jesus as the living Lord, the more shall we look forward, waiting for His coming, and going forth to meet Him. If we believe that He has come, we also hope that He will come. If we know the salvation-bringing grace of God which hath appeared, we shall with confiding hope look for the coming of our great God and Saviour. Thus "the hope" is the most comprehensive view of Christ's relation to a believer. Hence, when Paul said that "he stood and was judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers,"* he spoke out of his inmost heart. A dead faith is without hope; it does not behold Christ living; it does not desire Christ's return; it has never known Christ crucified.

We have been born again unto a lively hope. We are saved by hope, and we are waiting for the adoption; that is, the redemption of the body. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, if our

* Acts xxvi. 6.

horizon is limited by earth, if we do not look forward unto the appearing of our great God and Saviour, ours is indeed a miserable existence.

The profession of our hope is most practical and testing. Hereby we profess that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, that we are seeking heavenly things, labouring for heavenly rewards, laying up for ourselves heavenly treasures. We must forsake the sins, pleasures, and honours of Egypt; we must purify ourselves, as Christ is pure. If we profess *hope*, we must also rejoice, though we be in tribulation; we must view the sufferings and trials of this present life as not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. Then hope, resting on faith, supports faith, and fills us with courage and patience. "*Till I come,*" is the voice of the Saviour, when faith beholds His dying love; and going forth to meet Him, going forth out of the world's sin, bondage, gloom, is the response of the bride.

Hold fast then the profession of your hope; and as God is faithful who promised, so let us be *faithful to the hope*. Let us remember that we can only have one hope, one purpose, one God. Far be every thought of apostasy, of faint-heartedness, of hesitancy. Let us be strong and of a good courage, and when the soul is cast down and disquieted within us, let the spirit say, "Hope thou in God."

3. But in thus drawing near unto God, and holding fast the profession of our hope, we must bear in mind that we are called to be a brotherhood, and that faith and hope are to be exercised in love. We are the body of Christ, and members one of another. We are to please not ourselves, but our brother unto edification. The congregation of believers is ordered of God for the exercise of Christian love. We are to consider one another as fellow-pilgrims; to study our brother's need and sorrow, difficulty and trial; to exercise our mind on our duty and relation to him, that thus we may be helpful to him in his course, and stimulate and encourage him to good works.

To consider one another in the right spirit is to look above all at the Christian character of our brother; to regard him, not so much in the light of his natural disposition; to love him, not so much on account of qualities congenial and pleasing to us; still less to exercise criticism, and to cherish suspicion and uncharitable judgment; but to fix our thought on the one great fact of brotherhood in Christ, as the apostle Peter exhorts, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another fervently with a pure heart, *being born again.*" We should dwell on their excellencies, on the fruits of the Spirit which they bear, on the

features of Christ which they reflect; and every good thing that we discover in them should be to us as the voice of Christ, saying, "Follow Me." We should thus be benefited by every, even the humblest, Christian, and find it both easy and delightful in lowliness of mind to esteem each other better than ourselves. And running together in a holy rivalry the same race, we should behold in our brother features of Christian character and activity in which we are deficient.

And in this spirit of love we should cherish Christian communion; "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." Christianity is eminently an individual heart-affair; but it is also eminently social. The promise of Christ's presence is to the assembly gathered in His name. As a congregation we are to show the death of the Lord. The voice of melody is heard in the assembly of saints. We are to encourage and exhort one another. "Let us remember to build our inward service upon God's blessed gospel, and to build up our outward profession upon inward heart-religion, and social communion upon a personal profession of believing."*

In times of persecution or of lukewarmness, Christian fellowship is specially important; it is likewise a test of our faithfulness. Are we ashamed of the Lord, of His truth, of His

* Dr. Duncan.

followers, of His reproach? The Hebrews, it seems, needed this word of exhortation, and the apostle confirms it by the solemn addition, "Forasmuch as ye see the day approaching." The apostle refers, doubtless, to the approaching judgment on Jerusalem, connecting it, according to the law of prophetic vista, with the final crisis. Because the Lord is at hand, we are to be patient, loving, gentle, exercising forbearance towards our brother, while examining with strict care our own work.

The second advent of our Lord is the most powerful, as well as the most constraining motive. Do we hope to be with Christ and all the saints in glory, and shall we not love the brethren, and minister unto them, while we are waiting together for His coming? Do we expect Christ to acknowledge us as His brethren, and shall we be ashamed of Christ's members, or treat them with cold neglect and indifference? Have we all to appear before the tribunal of Christ and to account for our stewardship, and shall we not be faithful and diligent in exercising whatever ministry is entrusted to us, as God hath bestowed unto each one of us his own measure and gift? Called to eternal fellowship of love in joy and glory, let us fulfill the ministry of love in suffering and service, and let every day see some help and consolation given to our fellow-pilgrim.

Christians "see the day approaching;" for they love Christ's appearing; and to them the day of light is not far off. Jesus said, "I come quickly." The long delay of centuries does not contradict this "quickly." Christ is looking forward unto His return, and unto nothing else. All events only prepare and further this great consummation. And the Christians of every period recognize that the mystery of ungodliness is already working, and that our only hope is the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let this hope separate us from the evil which is in the world, and strengthen and gladden us in all our sorrows and difficulties; let it bind us together in the fellowship and ministry of love. Let us exhort one another daily by word and by example.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY.*

HEBREWS x. 26-39.

THE apostle now confirms the preceding exhortation, first by a severe and solemn warning against apostasy, and then by an affectionate and hope-inspiring remembrance of their past sufferings, and by the assurance of his confidence in their sincere faith. Before considering the awful words of warning which the apostle addresses here to professing believers, it may be useful to refer briefly to some misconceptions which prevent some readers of Scripture from receiving in a meek and docile spirit solemn admonitions of the Holy Ghost, such as the present.

(1.) There is an undue and one-sided haste to be happy and in the enjoyment of comfort. We are apt to forget that God's great object is to bring us and keep us nigh unto Himself, and that our true and only blessedness is in

* Compare Lecture xiii. of my first volume on Hebrews.

communion with the living God. In our present state, all Scripture consolation must contain exhortation. We must eat the sweet Pashcal Lamb with bitter herbs of repentance and self-abasement. The man who received the gospel immediately and with joy was right, both in at once accepting the message and in rejoicing. Thus did Saul of Tarsus, and the Ethiopian, and many others, who brought forth fruit with patience. But herein consisted the untrue and defective character of his immediate joy, that it was not out of a broken heart and in godly sorrow; and thus there is a morbid tendency, even among true believers, to take joy and calm as a "robbery," prematurely, superficially, and of their own power. It is to be feared that many who have never come truly to Jesus are resting in false security.

(2.) There is a one-sided and unscriptural forgetfulness of the actual position of the believer (or professing believer), as a man who is still on the road, in the battle; who has still the responsibility of trading with the talent entrusted, of watching for the return of the Master. Now there are many bye-paths, dangers, precipices on the road, and we must persevere to the end. Only they who overcome and are faithful unto death shall be crowned. It is not spiritual, but carnal, to take the blessed and solemn doctrines of our election in Christ and of the per-

severance of the saints, given us as a cordial for fainting hours, and as the inmost and ultimate secret of the soul in its dealings with God, and place them on the common and daily road of our duties and trials, *instead* of the precepts and warnings of the divine Word. It is not merely that God keeps us through these warnings and commandments, but the attitude of soul which neglects and hurries over these portions of Scripture is not child-like, humble, and sincere. The attempts to explain away the fearful warnings of Scripture against apostasy are rooted in a very morbid and dangerous state of mind. A precipice is a precipice, and it is folly to deny it. "If we live after the flesh," says the apostle, "we shall die." Now, to keep people from falling over a precipice, we do not put up a slender and graceful hedge of flowers, but the strongest barrier we can; and piercing spikes or cutting pieces of glass to prevent calamities. But even this is only the surface of the matter. Our walk with God and our perseverance to the end are great and solemn realities. We are dealing with the living God, and only life with God, and in God, and unto God, can be of any avail here. He who brought us out of Egypt is now guiding us; and if we follow *Him*, and follow Him to the end, we shall enter into the final rest.

(3.) We must bear in mind that God in the

gospel, and in the outward Church,* deals with mankind, and not merely with the "elect," known only unto Him. The revelation of God in Christ places the whole world, unto which it is sent, in a peculiar position. It places professing Christians, whether they be genuine or not, in a position of most solemn responsibility. God alone can judge the heart. A man professing faith in Christ, and spiritual enjoyment of the truth, may be a hypocrite, or self-deceived, or in a state of temporary declension and apparent death. The Word, the message of God in Scripture, and through the ministry, places the same truth before all; the character of God; the only salvation in Christ Jesus; the necessity and evidence of the renewal of the heart; the final perdition of ungodly men. The apostle, seeing the danger in which the

* The doctrine of the visible Church has of late years been much overlooked by many, who are anxious to bring prominently forward the spiritual Church of the regenerate and true believer. But the position of professing Christians, of those who as children of believers or otherwise have been brought up in the Christian Church, is one of special privilege and responsibility. It is true, that if the fishes are bad, their having been in the net will not save them ultimately; but their being in the net places them in a special relationship to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, both at present and in the future judgment. The nations of Christendom, it must be admitted by all, stand in a different position from heathen nations; and what is true of the nation, is true of the individual. Whether he believes or not; the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has been declared unto him and pronounced upon him.

Hebrews were, places before them the awful position of those who, having professed the knowledge and enjoyment of the great and glorious salvation by the blood of Christ, turn away from the Saviour, and choose to live deliberately and continuously without the love and obedience of Christ. For such there is no more sacrifice for sin, and the wrath of God, which abideth on every one that believeth not on the Son of God, must fall with more fearful severity on those who, having been brought into contact with the love of God in Christ—how near a contact we cannot judge, but very near according to their own profession—have forsaken the Lord and His service.

The doctrine of the whole Word of God is, that the blood of Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin. Even in the Old Testament the expressions describing the guilt and aggravated character of the sins which Jehovah is ready to forgive are exceedingly strong and large, so that none should despair, but turn in trustful repentance unto Him who delights to pardon abundantly. But the New Testament expressions could not be more distinct and emphatic to show, that through the blood of Christ there is forgiveness for sin, sins, all sins, without distinction and limitation. If it were not so, who of us could have any peace or hope? Ours are not merely sins of ignorance and weakness, but sins against light, and

against that grace which is given to us, and which is sufficient to overcome sin.

It is evident that the apostle refers here to the voluntary and determined choice of leading a sinful and God-estranged life, which choice is made by those who, having known to some extent, and having professed to have experienced the grace of Christ, turn away from the one and only Name in which we can be saved. If under the law of Moses death without mercy was the immediate recompense of the wilful transgressor, how much more fearful will be the punishment of him who has treated the Son of God with contempt, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, which for awhile he esteemed precious, an unholy thing, and has turned away the gracious Spirit under whose teaching and influence he has been? We know the holy and righteous indignation of the Almighty, who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." The Lord will judge His people.*

Christ's sheep shall never perish; all God's children shall be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. It is by these stern and solemn warnings that the elect are kept. We know both from Scripture and sad experience, that even true Christians are not exempt from the

* The quotations are from the book of Deuteronomy xxxii. 35, 36 (compare Ps. cxxxv. 14), announcing a special judgment on the apostate. The apostle quotes the passage in Romans xii. 19 in the same way, from the Hebrew, and not the LXX.

danger of serious and protracted departure from the truth and love of God. And lastly, we know that men who were thought to be living and faithful members of the Church have fallen, at first into apathy and worldliness, then into heresy and sin, lastly into most bitter and fanatical opposition of Christ's gospel and flock. The apostolic epistles themselves, especially those last written, contain most melancholy and heart-stirring descriptions of apostates. Such wretched men belonged to the visible church, to the outward great house, and as such they must be judged.*

The warning is necessary, for the actual condition of the Church embraces false professors. It is necessary and salutary for all, for young and weak believers as well as for the most experienced. It is above all *true*; for the gospel reveals to us the living and holy God, the earnestness and jealousy, as well as the tenderness of divine love.

It is the humble and true believer who marks these warnings and lays them to heart. It is he who says, "Lord, is it I?" And though sometimes he is betrayed into a despondency, in which a subtle unbelief turns away from the grace of the Lord Jesus, yet God comforts His people, and

* 1 John ii. 19; 2 Peter ii; Jude 10-16. The expression, "fall into the hands of the living God," used by humble and penitent David (2 Sam. xxiv. 14), refers there to the divine compassion which characterizes His judgment on His people. Here it refers to the omnipotence and punitive justice of God.

shows unto those who write bitter things against themselves, that His thoughts are thoughts of peace concerning them. Blessed are all who tremble at God's Word.

The believer beholds the precipice of apostasy, and clings close to God. He sees the divine justice and the fire of God's jealousy, and he prays to be delivered from all worldly affections and idols. He sees the way before him, and instead of resting on the enchanted ground, he forgets the things that are behind, and presses on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He does not boast that he has left the city of Destruction and spread out the fact of his conversion as a tent to rest in, but the pearly gates of the heavenly Jerusalem stand before the eyes of his heart, and from beyond the gates he hears the voice, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

Mark now the bearing of our passage on the mere professor of Christianity.

If we follow our deceitful and sluggish hearts, we neither rejoice in God's promises, nor tremble at His threatenings. The world knows not the sweetness of divine love, nor does it stand in awe before God's wrath. And professing Christians also may forget that our God is a consuming fire, and that we must either serve Him with all our heart, or depart from Him as evildoers.

God sends now the message of peace ; but this message rests on the full manifestation, and not upon a *change*, of His character. And hence the gospel brings to him who, in fear and trembling, and with faith, accepts it, salvation, blood-bought and wrought into us by a total and central renewal of our hearts ; whereas it brings to him who rejects it a fuller disclosure of God's wrath, and a sterner announcement of everlasting perdition.*

The brighter light, the greater darkness ; the greater blessing, the more fearful curse. It is written, " He that believeth shall be saved ; " but it is likewise written, " He that believeth not shall be damned." It is written, " Blessed are all that trust in Jesus ; " but it is also written, " If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." It is written, " In my Father's house are many mansions ; " but it is also written, that unbelievers have their portion in the burning lake. Capernaum was lifted up to heaven, because Jesus had come to them ; but it shall be cast into hell, because they rejected Jesus.

The wrath of God is removed from all who believe in Jesus ; but does it not remain on all who reject Jesus ? Is not their rejection of Jesus the crowning sin of all sin ?

* It is worthy of notice, that the passages announcing the doctrine of everlasting punishment are chiefly in the New Testament.

He who, being taught the gospel, remains impenitent, unbelieving, worldly, rejects God. First, the Father; for He sent Jesus. The Father has no other message, no other channel of grace. In not accepting Christ as the Saviour, the Father's gift is despised. But the unbeliever, or the formalist, rejects also Jesus. He counts the blood of the Son of God an unholy, common, lifeless, powerless thing. By this blood sinners are cleansed, sanctified, brought nigh to worship, love, and serve God in liberty of spirit and peace of conscience. But he who, knowing of this precious blood, is without prayer, without holiness, without peace, is he not sinning against the blood of Christ? And lastly, the unbeliever does despite to the Spirit of grace. For the Spirit is constantly witnessing of the love of the Father in Jesus, of the grace of Jesus in His blood.

Now, if under the dispensation of Moses the holiness of God's good and loving law was vindicated, how much more will they be thought guilty who neglect the eternal gospel of the divine love, the new covenant sealed with the blood of the Son of God? No sacrifice for sins is on the path of unbelief; turning away from Jesus, there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. This warning has a bearing on *all* who are under the gospel

dispensation. God has declared His name, He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. And by this revelation shall all men unto whom it is sent be judged.

Now there is a very common, though unexpressed, misconception, that the gospel, instead of revealing, *modifies* the divine character; that in the gospel God is represented as a less holy, awful, and jealous God, than in the Old Testament Scripture. People imagine that in the gospel there is nothing but grace and forgiveness, *whether they believe it or not*; whether they repent and are renewed or not. Now there could not be a more radical misunderstanding of God's Word. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith, because the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and to deliver us from *this wrath* God has sent His Son, and through His death provides righteousness for all who turn unto God in repentance and faith. The very salvation of God, the death of Jesus, reveals to us more clearly than the law of Moses, that God is just, and that even in the person of His own beloved Son, made a substitute for sinners, divine justice must be vindicated. The gospel-revelation is therefore the revelation of *God*, the only true and living God, of whom we read in Moses and the prophets. There is but One, and

our God is a consuming fire. In the book of Revelation, given by the Lord Jesus Himself in His heavenly glory to the beloved disciple, we can read—and blessed are they that read with reverential fear and unfeigned faith—that while believers, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, who have overcome, shall be united with their adorable Lord and Redeemer in everlasting joy and glory, the justice, holiness, and truth of God shall be made manifest in fearful judgment on all who do not submit themselves to His one and blessed gospel. In preaching therefore to the world we must present both sides—life and death, glory and judgment—the marriage feast, and the wrath of the Lamb.

There is next the dangerous condition of the lukewarm Christian. Through the deceitfulness of sin, through spiritual sloth or pride, through the allurements of the world, through the subtlety of Satan, a Christian falls into a careless condition, in which his spiritual perceptions, affections, and energies are blunted. Prayer becomes a form, and Christ mourns over a lukewarm Laodicean. The most subtle and dangerous temptation for such a one is to fancy that he is safe in his *present* condition; that he may safely remain in his present departure from his first love; that it is not absolutely necessary for him to go out

and weep bitterly; to repent and to do the first works.

What reason has such a one to believe that he is a true disciple, seeing that perseverance is the test of true discipleship? Does he not remember that many received the Word with joy, and yet did not endure, but fell away? Why does Jesus command us to remember Lot's wife, who was lost because her whole heart had not left Sodom, and she turned back? Do we not read of Demas, who, after being first a disciple, forsook the apostle, and became enamoured again of this present world?

But I will change my voice; for I am speaking to the Lord's people, beloved even during their faithlessness. Then tell me, Was it not better with you in the days of your first love? Was it not better with you when you rested on Christ Himself, when at the throne of God you poured out your heart, and the peaceful answer of God comforted you? Or what unfaithfulness have you found in God that you have forsaken Him? Or where is the bill of divorcement that God gave you, saying that He would no longer love and cherish you, and be your daily guide and blessing?

Return unto the Lord! When the soul awakes from its slumber and returns to the Saviour, a sweet and peaceful light rises within, truthful and trusty, and he beholds the goodness and faithful-

ness of the Lord. The past and the future are illumined ; for Jesus is with him, the light of life. Then, as the apostle proceeds here, we call to remembrance the former days, and look forward to the coming of Christ. When we are brought back into the *current of life* (not while on the shore of worldliness and unbelief), we remember, even as we feel again, our first faith and joy, and the afflictions and tests we were then enabled to endure. We hear a voice saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals." And then the soul is able to praise God, who made the outgoings of the morning to rejoice.

We remember our first confession, "Thou art the Christ ;" and the first salutation of the Saviour, "Blessed art thou." Jesus says again to us, "Feed my lambs," and "Follow thou Me." And then the end also appears approaching, Jesus Himself returning with His glorified saints.

The believers in Judæa, who at first found favour with the people on account of the evident presence of the Spirit of God among them, soon became the object of persecution. Their faith was tested. In the death of Stephen, the death of James, the brother of John, the imprisonment of Peter, the whole congregation suffered, and had to endure a great fight of afflictions ; they were made a gazing-stock ; they became companions of them that suffered for the sake of Christ. Paul

himself had been pre-eminently the prisoner of the Lord; before the whole world he bore imprisonment and reproach, because of his testimony. The apostle reminds them of the grace which had been given unto them to bear their cross, and to sacrifice ease, honour, and possessions for the sake of the gospel and the hope. It is to encourage them to persevere to the end, that after the seed time in tears they may reap the harvest of joy.

Having thus reminded them in the tone of affectionate recognition of their first zeal, he concludes with the threefold exhortation: Cast not away your confidence; be patient; live by faith.

1. God hath given you in Jesus a joyous, child-like confidence, that you can call Him Abba, and rest peacefully in the love of the Saviour. You trust Him, who is able to keep that which you have committed to Him, your all, unto that day. This confidence itself is the earnest of the future inheritance. Faith is the forerunner of sight. As you trust, so you will receive.

2. You have need of patience; this is the time of waiting, of watching, of conflict, of sorrow; many difficulties and temptations surround you. But learn to be patient. Impatience is the result of ignorance, but you know why and for whom you have to wait. It is the result of pride, but

you are to learn of the meek One, who was lowly in heart. Impatience arises out of an unbelieving and desponding heart; but through the Scripture you obtain patience and comfort, and hope is kept alive. Impatience arises from undervaluing the importance of the present; but you know that you are now doing the will of God, and that your present exercises of faith and your present sufferings are appointed by Him, who values and rewards them. The duties of our earthly life may often appear irksome and trifling; but as a faithful sentinel knows that his monotonous work is an act of obedience to him who has appointed him, and will release him at the right time; as dutiful children and pupils persevere with tasks which seem sometimes uninteresting and unimportant, exercising thereby faith in beloved parents and teachers, so will the Christian cherish patience and cheerfulness in fulfilling the Master's will.

The necessity, importance, and blessedness of patience are brought constantly before us by the Lord Himself and by His apostles. Jesus speaks of our bringing forth fruit with patience, and of our possessing our souls in patience during great trials and painful delays. From His heavenly throne He notices and commends the patience of Ephesus and Thyatira; and to Philadelphia He says, "Thou has kept the Word of my patience."

The beloved disciple, who calls himself companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, exclaims twice in the book of Revelation, "Here is the patience of the saints."

The apostle Paul associates patience with hope, with comfort of the Scriptures, with the God of patience and consolation, with meekness and long-suffering, with tribulation, of which it is to be the blessed result. In the epistle of James patience is represented as the fruit of faith's trial, as that which perfects the Christian character, as the attitude of the believer who waits for the Saviour, as the exemplary quality of Job and the prophets.*

Quiet submission and persevering continuance in well-doing under difficulties and conflict is that will of God, according to which Christ's members are to follow the Master in His humility and suffering. When Jesus comes, they who have thus done the will of the Father will bear away triumphantly the prize of their high calling. (*v.* 36.)

3. Meanwhile ours is the life of faith. Jesus will come. As it is written in the prophet: "Yet a little while"—how very, very little!†—and He, whose name is the coming One, will come. Now

* Rom. v. 3; xv. 4, 5; James i. and v.

† The reference is to Isa. xxvi. 20, and Hab. ii. 3, 4. In the former passage, the LXX. translate a small moment *μικρον δσον δσον*. Messiah was called by the Jews the coming One. (Matt. xi. 3; Luke vii. 19.) Compare Ps. xl. 8; cxviii. 26; Zech. ix. 9; Mal. iii. 1; Dan. vii. 13.

the just live by faith ; but if anyone draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

To the prophet Habakkuk, the first and second coming of the Lord were still coincident. He waited for the advent of Jehovah to deliver Israel from the Chaldeans, and to manifest His glory. The ungodly were lifted up with pride and self-reliance ; God's people cried in great anguish, How long ? but in humility, in deep sorrow, in sincere heart-dealing with Jehovah, asking Him why He contended with His people, the godly Israelite held fast the promise ; he trusted, and this was his only and his true life. The prophet and all the godly ones were sorely tried. They saw nothing but violence, iniquity, strife, and contention. " O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear ! " Surely they had need of patience. And the Lord answered and comforted them by renewing the promise of His coming, and calling on His people to exercise *faith*, as the sole and decisive mark of the godly. " For the vision has a still future goal, and speaks

* The first part of this sentence is quoted from the prophet Habakkuk. The addition is suggested to the apostle by the somewhat difficult and obscure rendering of the LXX., When he draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. The words added by the apostle, correcting the current translation, give a meaning in harmony with the scope of the exhortation. Thus we have in this latter clause, not so much a quotation as *an adaptation of a well-known translation*. A similar view is given by Calvin and Hofmann.

of the last time without deceiving. Though it tarry, wait for it; He will surely come, the coming One; He will not tarry." Unbelief and sloth see delay, worldliness and pride mock, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But the just shall live by faith; he beholds in faith the Lord's advent.

The sentence in Habakkuk is very concise, and the apostolic comment in two important epistles* brings out the fulness of the original meaning. Who is the just? We first read in Scripture of righteousness in connection with Abraham's faith.† Abraham is the father of the godly. Believers then are the just ones; and by faith they are just. And the life which we now live is by faith, even as the full salvation shall be given at the Lord's coming to them that believe.‡

And is not our position essentially the same, though one of much greater privilege? We are placed between the peaceful light of the cross of Christ and the glory and reward of the returning Saviour. *This is historically the God-given position of Christendom, of all who have heard and of all who profess the gospel.* Be it ours to believe

* Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11.

† Gen. xv. 6.

‡ In the *Gemara Makkot* it is narrated that David summed up the 613 commandments of the Mosaic law in eleven (Psalm xv.); Isaiah in six (xxxiii. 15; Micah in three (vi. 8); but Habakkuk in one, "The just shall live by faith." (*Delitzsch on Habakkuk*, p. 53.) The author of this remark was surely not far from the kingdom of God. Another ancient Jewish writer combines Psalm cxviii. 19; Isaiah xxvi. 2; Jer. v. 3; and Hab. ii. 4.

and to hope ; to look back in faith on the atonement ; to look forward in hope to the glory. God's people do not look and turn back. He who draws back may appear to the eye of sense to be saving his life ; but, as the Saviour often teaches us, who-soever will hate and lose his life for Christ's sake shall find and save it.* When Peter turns to look at John, the Master says emphatically, "Thou follow Me."† Let us follow the Lord, for "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."‡

* Matt. xvi. 25 ; Luke xvii. 33 ; x. 39 ; Mark viii. 35 ; ix. 24 ; John xii. 25. This was evidently a saying which the Lord repeated frequently.

† John xxi. 20-23.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 9.

CHAPTER XXX.

FAITH AND THINGS HOPED FOR AND UNSEEN.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

THE pre-eminence of faith is kept in view throughout this whole epistle, which the writer himself describes as a word of exhortation. For this purpose the apostle unfolds the glory of the Lord Jesus as the great Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, that the Hebrews may continue in the faith, considering the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, drawing near in full confidence to the throne of grace, realizing the true, substantial blessings of the new covenant, and waiting for the promised return of their Lord. Unbelief was the reason why the Jews, with whom God was grieved, could not enter into rest: if we believe not, as Isaiah had testified, we cannot be established. The apostle warned the Hebrews by the most solemn and awful arguments from their own Scriptures against unbelief. But as he exhorts them most earnestly, so he hopes also in the exercise of deep affection that they belong not to them who draw back unto perdition,

but that they are of the true disciples who believe to the saving of the soul.

Live then by faith; for only by faith is it possible for the just to live. The things hoped for and the things not seen, which are now made manifest in full perfection by the gospel of Christ, can only be realized by faith, even as it was by faith that all the godly, since the beginning of the world, lived and suffered, obeyed and conquered. In order to encourage, stimulate, and comfort them in the midst of trial and temptation, he brings before them in rapid but most vivid and comprehensive sketches the history of the fathers, whom they regarded with the profoundest reverence and affection, showing them that theirs also was the life of faith. What was their greatness, but that they were men of God? and what made them men of God, but that they believed God, and waited for the fulfilment of His promise? Faith was the characteristic feature of all the saints. It is the attitude of heart, without which there is no communion with God, and without which we cannot please Him. The apostle gives therefore the most comprehensive definition of faith, describing the radical and essential disposition of heart Godwards, in whatever dispensation men lived, both before the first advent and in the Church period. It consists at all times in a firm confidence of unseen and future realities.

There are things hoped for in the future, in eternity ; there are things not seen, both past and present. The latter expression is more comprehensive than the former. The second advent, our resurrection and glory, are future things hoped for ; God, as the creator and upholder of all things, and all spiritual truths and heavenly realities, belong to the unseen, of which faith alone can have assurance. The heart of man, although since the fall gravitating towards the things which are seen and which are present, is never satisfied with the visible and temporary, but cannot rest except in the spiritual and eternal. God of His great mercy hath revealed unto us the things of God ; eternal and spiritual realities have been manifested by God's Spirit. There is a divine revelation ; the things which man's reason cannot discern or his imagination and intuition discover, have been unveiled. God revealed Himself, He spoke unto the fathers, and His revelation contained always a promise of future and never-ending blessings, as well as a manifestation of present spiritual and heavenly realities. The victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent was a future thing, the object of hope ; the manifestation of Jehovah's holy love, combining mercy with judgment, was the manifestation of a present, though unseen, spiritual reality. The promise of the seed, in whom all nations are to be blessed, was a future

thing ; the assurance, " I am thy God, walk before Me," revealed a present unseen but much real blessedness. Now all communion with God was based upon the divine revelation of things hoped for, and things not seen.

How is this revelation received ? What is the eye that sees, the organ that beholds and appropriates this gift ? Faith is the eye that beholds the King in His beauty, and that sees the land that is afar off. Not man's intellect, not man's imagination, not man's conscience ; all these become indeed most deeply, radically, and thoroughly the servants of faith ; but that which discerns and beholds spiritual realities and appropriates them, that which beholds future blessings, and so grasps and cherishes them as to prefer them to things visible, and to make them the object and joy of life, is what Scripture calls *faith*.

Now faith appears at first sight a very simple thing ; it is nothing else but receiving the Word of God. We know what it is to receive the word of a man, to believe statements, though strange and surpassing our experience, because we regard the character of him who makes them with respect and confidence. Faith in God's Word is receiving God's testimony. But then, remember, as God is greater than man, as God's Word is heaven-high above any human word, so the reception of this

Word, the believing of this Word, is necessarily something quite different from the reception of any human word or testimony. As is the voice, so is the echo ; as is the seal, so is the impression ; as is the word, or revelation, so is the faith. The divine Word produces in the heart of man faith, which is divine in its nature and power. When God speaks, when God discloses to the soul the world of spiritual realities and of future blessings, this very word of His creates within the soul a new world of fear, shame, contrition, desire, reverence, longing, hope, trust, which no other word could call forth, perfectly unique in its character, as God's word is unique in its character. To assent to the Word of God is therefore to enter into a perfectly new life, a perfectly new mode and power of existence. Nothing but God's word could ever have called forth that which we call faith, and God's word, Spirit-given as it is, only when vitalized by the same Holy Ghost. Where then is the seat of faith ? Not in the intellect, which sees the logical connection or the historic evidence ; not in the imagination, which recognizes the beauty and organic symmetry, and reproduces the picture ; not in the conscience, which testifies to the righteousness and truth of the revelation ; but in a something which lies deeper than these, in which all these centre, and to which all these return. With the *heart*, as the

Scripture teacheth, man believeth. There, whence are the issues of life, emotional, intellectual, moral, spiritual, in that secret place, to which God alone has access, God's word, as a seed, begets faith; God's word, as a light, kindles light, and the *man* becomes a *believer*. Believer describes the whole man. This is the characteristic and the power of the new life—we believe in God.

See then how mistaken those are who fancy faith to consist in the mere assent of the understanding to doctrines and facts, seen to be true on sufficiently evidenced authority. See how no man can give faith to another; how the mere reception by reason, or sentiment, or fancy, of clear and pathetic statements of gospel truth is not faith. Without desiring the things future, without turning in sorrow and self-condemnation to the unseen God—revealed without the heart clinging in trustfulness to God the Saviour—there is no faith. God speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, and faith is the heart hearing and responding.

In this faith, called forth by the Word of God, and brought forth by the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is from its very birth and commencement an element of certainty, conviction, light, which transcends the certainty of the senses or of the intellect. Human argumentations deal generally with words, abstractions, vessels of mere formal conceptions. God's Spirit reveals to us

the *things* of God, and the things of God which are given to us ; so that from the river which flows into our heart and lives, according to the promise of Jesus, we know with perfect certainty the eternal fountain of divine love, and the infinite ocean of endless blessedness, towards which we hasten. Where in the whole realm of thought and feeling is there anything to compare with the Christian's "I am persuaded that nothing can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus"? Hence he who believes says, I know ; or he says, I believe, and am sure, that thou art the Christ. When God speaks to the soul, and the soul, giving up its own judgment and thoughts, receives in humility the testimony of God, faith stands in the power of God. The Spirit demonstrates, that is, shows as realities the things of God. Faith is the evidence, the clear and all-sufficient demonstration,* of things not seen ; and it is an assured con-

* The apostle uses here a term which occurred in his day often in philosophy ; the more so as the thing itself is wanting in all human metaphysics, proof, evidence, or demonstration which meets all objections and admits no doubt. Philosophy has no such demonstration of things invisible and unknown ; it cannot give such certainty ; the divine testimony brings with it such inward conviction ; faith resting on divine testimony possesses such certainty.—MENKEN, *Homilien über Heb.* xi.

Human reasoning loves to give itself the appearance of perfect originality, and every new metaphysical system appears with some degree of assumption of having arisen out of the depths of a human mind and of being built up by necessary laws of thought. Perhaps nothing so fascinates and entangles young minds as this

fidence in the fulfilment of things hoped for ; so much so that the *power* and *comfort* of the future is even now realized, though it doth not yet appear what we shall be : faith stedfastly anticipates the fulfilment and possesses the substance.* Do not look upon assurance of faith, as it is called, as a subsequent addition to the original faith which first grasps the promise ; all faith, and be it but as a grain of mustard seed, possesses the God-given certainty, trust, conviction, light. " O God, Thou art my God ; I will put my trust in Thee."

Thus all the children of God lived by faith. They knew God's character ; they believed His

promise, " Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Hamann refers to this when he asks : Is your whole human reasoning anything else but tradition ? and does it require much to trace the succession of your bare and twice-dead opinions to the root of your genealogical tree ?

* The expression *ὑπόστασις*, substance, is used (1) in the sense of essence (Heb. i. 3), and (2) in the sense of confidence. (Heb. iii. 14 ; also 2 Cor. ix. 4, xi. 17.) Taken in the latter sense, the meaning of the passage would be, that faith is a standing, confiding expectation of future things, which as future are objects of hope. But the expression seems also to suggest the other aspect of faith, as realizing and possessing, even in the present, the blessings and powers of the future. The expression *ἔλεγχος* teaches that faith itself is to the believer a sure argument of the reality of those things which cannot be seen, or which cannot otherwise be discerned. An interesting passage is quoted by Delitzsch from Dante, *Paradise*, xxiv. on faith, a paraphrase of Heb. xi. 1. His words, in reply to the question how he obtained faith, are also memorable : " The flood, I answered, from the Spirit of God rained down upon the ancient bond and new. Here is the reasoning that convinceth me so feelingly ; each argument beside seems blunt and forceless in comparison."

mighty works in creation; they rejoiced in His presence; they realized the future blessings He promised. Israel beheld God, the invisible, and they waited for the Messiah. This was their whole life. This is the explanation of their self-denial, courage, patience. Though the present and actual condition was full of reproach and suffering, yet they knew God was theirs, and the future glory and inheritance remained secure. What shall we say of our father Abraham, and of his children? What else but that they were *believers*, receiving the promises by faith, even as by faith they realized the ever-present Jehovah? And just as the first mention of priesthood in Scripture is not in connection with the Levitical successional priesthood, but with Melchisedec, type of the Son of God, the true, real, personal Priest, so the word "righteousness," it occurs for the first time in the book of Genesis, as the apostle Paul notices exultingly, not in connection with law and works, but with grace and faith. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and this golden sentence shines forth again in the pregnant declaration of the prophet Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith;" and again in the fulness of the Pentecostal light Habakkuk's word is illumined in the epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, and in our chapter, where the whole Old Testament history

is described as the history of men who lived by faith, confidently expecting things hoped for, and fully assured of the reality of things unseen.

But if the glory of the old covenant was great, much greater is the glory of the new dispensation. Greater and better things were reserved for us. Israel's future was the advent of Messiah, the descent of Jehovah—the coming of their king David, to give glory to Israel and light to the Gentiles; and Israel's unseen things were the salvation truths manifested in type and prophecy, in God's words and dealings. But contrast with this our position. Our future, though comprehending Israel's, contains new and peculiar elements. Messiah's first advent is past. Accomplished is His exodus at Jerusalem,* finished His work in Golgotha; as Son of man He is now enthroned at the Father's right hand; and we expect Him now to return to receive His bride, that we may be glorified together with Him. To us it is said, "Go ye forth to meet the Bridegroom;" to us it is announced, "This same Jesus shall so come again in the clouds of heaven." Now that the incarnation and the death and ascension of the Son of God have been accomplished, how much brighter is our hope! how much clearer and more blessed are the things hoped for, and the things not seen! For if, like Stephen, dead

* Luke ix. 31.

to the world and filled with the love of Christ, we look stedfastly towards heaven, we see the glory of God, and Jesus at the right hand of the Father. This was the great object of our epistle, to reveal the things not seen, the glory and grace of the heavenly sanctuary. The throne of grace, the blood of Christ, the intercession of the Saviour, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, are the things unseen; Christ's coming again, and we manifest with Him in glory, things hoped for.

It is clear why in this epistle the apostle gives such a general and comprehensive view of faith. The question of justification and sanctification is not before him. Christ the Priest, heaven the holy of holies, believers for ever perfected in Jesus, this is the all-important point towards which all his arguments tend; hence *faith*, and faith in its most general or root-sense, as beholding unseen and future things, is the great and constant theme of his exhortation.

We also need the faith explained in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, to be deepened and quickened as well as tested by the faith explained in this epistle. The sinner, first brought to a knowledge of his guilt and misery, beholds the Lamb of God; through faith in His blood he is justified and filled with joy and peace, and this by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is indeed the very centre of faith, and that to our very

last breath. But if we are really to continue in communion with God, to obey and to suffer, to work and to conquer, we must learn also the circumference of faith, beholding the things which are unseen and eternal : through Jesus we believe in God, we have our citizenship in heaven.

Faith is what Jesus sought in Israel ; and when the Son of man cometh again He asks, Shall He find *faith* on the earth ? How often did Jesus say, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee !" Only believe ! is His word of consolation as well as rebuke. And how harmonious is the testimony of the apostles. Peter cannot leave Jesus, because he believes and is sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God ; faith in the name of Jesus was what he preached in Jerusalem. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins," is his message when he opens the door to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Faith was also the result of his preaching, as he writes, "Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

In like manner John, the beloved disciple. Not even the apostle Paul gave a fuller and deeper testimony to the pre-eminence of faith. True, he was called to point out the relation between faith and works, law and gospel, the dispensation of Moses, and the dispensation of the Spirit, and

hence for teaching and convincing men, the Jews, the self-righteous, the natural man in general, we must always go to the Pauline epistles. But the nature, essence, power, and victory of faith are nowhere described with such clearness and energy as in the writings of John. Let me remind you of a few of his golden words: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Faith is here represented as the gift of God, inseparably connected with the new birth and divine Sonship. Think again of the many declarations in his gospel in which the Lord connects faith with the (present and immediate) possession of eternal life.* Then again the indwelling of God in us and our indwelling in God, and the witness of the Spirit, are connected with faith.† Again, if we believe in Jesus, the Lord says, rivers of living water shall flow out of us, or the Spirit of God shall be given to us abundantly, so that, filled with the Holy Ghost, our words, influence, and works will be like fertilizing streams. And in like manner, if we believe, we shall do the same works which Christ did, and greater works, because the glorified Son of man

* John iii. 16, v. 24, xi. 25.

† 1 John iv. 15, v. 10.

is now with the Father.* Again, faith is described as the victory which overcometh the world.

We see that Scripture speaks thus of faith in a very deep and comprehensive manner, and that it is indeed a wonderful, mysterious, powerful grace given of God. Inseparably connected with eternal life, the indwelling of God, the witness of the Spirit, the victory over the world, and the imitation of Christ. Such a view may at first discourage anxious and seeking souls. Let them remember that it is their need and guilt, and nothing else, to which the words of the Lord Jesus and His call are addressed.

Have we faith? We say, we need a stronger degree of faith. Yet Jesus says, when the disciples ask Him to increase their faith, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye should say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should be done."† We say that we have weak faith, because we are yet babes in knowledge, and have discovered yet little of the treasures of divine revelation; but Jesus says, "Have faith in God."‡ The most elementary truth is sufficient. Realize God's power and love. We need not so much deeper knowledge, as faith in the simplest truths. We say that we have not the faith of some of God's eminent servants, yet

* John vii. 38, xiv. 12.

† Luke xvii. 6.

‡ Mark xi. 22.

Jesus says, "*Whosoever*" (not merely an apostle or prophet) "shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."* But let us remember for our comfort the great distinction between a dead or vain faith, and weak or little faith. The Lord rebukes the fearfulness and doubting of sincere disciples, yet He rebukes also the storm, and delivers His people from all their fears.† True faith takes hold of the divine Word; it is weak or strong, great or small, as it receives, keeps, and uses the Word of God. Abraham staggered not at the word of promise through unbelief, though it was a word most difficult, nay, impossible, for reason to receive, and thus Abraham was strong in faith. The source of weak faith is in the ignorance and slowness of the heart in reference to the divine testimony. The strength of faith is the humility of a helpless and broken heart cleaving to the promise. Worm Jacob becomes Israel; and a poor Syrophenician woman is transplanted "from the utmost corner of the land" to the foremost place by the Master's word, "O woman, great is thy faith!"

There was one who, next to the apostles, was perhaps the greatest gift of God to the Church,

* Mark xi. 23.

† Matt. viii. 24; xiv. 31.

whom we all admire for his faith. And yet Martin Luther was wont to say, "Oh, if I had faith! If I could only believe that God is the Creator! If I could only say in faith, Our Father!" And often he confessed, that unless every day he read the Scriptures, and meditated on Christ, and repeated the Creed, and prayed the Psalms, his heart became dead and cold, full of dark and hard thoughts of God, and of dreary and tormenting doubts and fears. Let us dwell then on Christ; let us consider Him in stedfast, diligent, frequent meditation; let the Word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts, minds, and homes. Let us connect the world of unseen and future realities with our walk and conduct, with our daily duties and trials. Let the life which we now live *in the flesh*—our present earthly life, with its work and trouble—be a life of faith. Things hoped for, Jerusalem the golden, and the constant presence of the Prince; things not seen, the throne of God and the great High Priest, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places—think of these things in your hearts, and with full purpose of will, all ye who sit by Babel's streams, with your harps on the willows; and though strangers and pilgrims, you will be able to sing the song of faith, you will go on from strength to strength.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FAITH IN GOD THE CREATOR.

HEBREWS xi. 3.

“**N**OW abideth faith, hope, love, these three.”
The apostle Paul has described the nature and power of these three fundamental, abiding, and inseparable gifts of grace in three chapters, which shine forth as bright stars in the firmament of Scripture.

Writing to the Corinthians, who were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, but who stood in danger of departing from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, and of falling into discord and lukewarmness, he showed the more excellent way by describing the pre-eminence, characteristics, and eternity of *love* in a hymn which proceeded from his inmost experience,* and which contains a portraiture of his own individuality.†

Again in the epistle to the Romans (chap. viii.), after having shown the position of the believer justified before God, and separated from sin by

* Notice the form of this chapter in the first person.

† 1 Cor. xiii.

the death of Christ, he shows how, in the midst of afflictions, and in the conflict with sin and the flesh, the believer is upheld by *hope*; from the high tower of hope, resting upon the sure foundation of faith, he beholds the manifestation of the sons of God, the redemption of our body, the regeneration of the whole creation, and he is persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. And in our chapter the same apostle brings before us the power of *faith* in a series of examples, which comprise the whole history of revelation from the beginning to the first advent. This wonderful exposition of the most fundamental of the fundamental graces stands before our eyes and hearts like a triumphal arch commemorating the beauty and the victory of faith. Faith, hope, love; these three inseparable gifts of the grace of God are brought before us continually in Scripture, and the simplest experience of the Christian recognizes their connection, as well as their relative position.

Faith comes first; for only when we believe the love of God, wherewith He loved us, we love Him and the brethren in Him. Only when we trust in Jesus we hope to see Him again. God speaks, God gives, the grace of God brings to us salvation. Since God begins, faith must needs be our beginning. "Salvation is of the Lord;" this itself implies the pre-eminence of faith. Jesus

is the Christ; this itself implies that only by trusting in Him can we be brought nigh to God. We have seen how the apostle John, who dwells so fully on the love of God towards us and the God-given love of believers towards God, points out the root-nature of faith. For this purpose was his gospel written, that we may believe, and believing, have eternal life, and know that we have life. For this purpose were his epistles written, that we who believe may live and walk in love; for God is love. And for this purpose was the book of Revelation given by the Lord Jesus to the apostle, that believing and loving we may hope for the Bridegroom's advent, to receive us unto Himself. Blessed is he who, believing in Jesus, can say, "Father;" who, loving the Father and the brethren, can say, "Our Father;" who, hoping for the inheritance above, can say, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

Things unseen are not doubtful to faith; but faith is the evidence, the clear and sure beholding of the things of God, shown or demonstrated by the Holy Ghost. Things future are not vague and shadowy, for faith gives them substance; so that they influence, gladden, and uphold us in our earthly life. Not as the world giveth gives God unto us. Our faith is not a pale and uncertain light; it is not inferior to the knowledge of reason, or memory, or the senses; it is light, conviction,

substance. We have the things we believe, and which God has freely given to us.

Now in illustrating the power of faith, the apostle begins with Abel and ends with the Maccabees. Israel's history commences, strictly speaking, with Abraham ; but as Israel was chosen in Christ, and for the salvation of all nations, so the beginning of Israel's history is, more strictly speaking, from the very first believer in the Messiah. Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am ;" and thus we may say, Before Abraham was, were Abraham's children, the seed of faith ; so that the father of the faithful will rejoice, not merely over all the Gentiles who believe in the promised and now manifested Redeemer, but shall behold Abel and Enoch and Noah, and all the saints of the pre-Abrahamic period, numbered among his children. Yet the distinctness, and the peculiar position of Israel in the kingdom, remains an undoubted fact revealed in Scripture.

We may wonder why the list of believers does not commence with Adam. But the reason is obvious. Scripture is inspired, both in its narrative and in its silence. Moses does not mention Adam's faith in the promise, and his return to the favour and love of God. He implies it ; and the reason of his not stating it fully is, because throughout the whole Scripture Adam is brought before us, not as an individual, but as the representative,

the federal head of humanity, in whom we stood, in whom we fell, through whose disobedience sin and death came upon all. This is the sad but fundamental truth which we are to remember in connection with Adam. From him we are to look to Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as to the second Adam, our Righteousness and our Life. We have no doubt that Adam and Eve believed to the saving of their souls. But Adam's typical and federal character is so important that all other aspects are thrown into the shade.

But the apostle may have another reason. We inherit from Adam unbelief, distrust of God's Word, suspicion of His kind and loving purposes, the tendency to ask, Is it so? when God says it is so; and to say, I will not go, when God commands to go. The Father, the author of faith, is not Adam, but the Lord Jesus. Hence is it more appropriate and instructive to begin the series of believers not with Adam. And yet, as faith in God the Creator is mentioned before Abel's faith, there seems an allusion to Adam before the fall. As the Creator, God revealed Himself to our first parents. All knowledge possessed by creatures of creation is necessarily by *faith* in God's revelation. The very angels, who rejoiced when they beheld the six days' work, were not witnesses of the first creation of heaven and earth, since they themselves were called out of non-existence into

being. They also by *faith* understand that God created all things.

And this declaration of the apostle, as it remains true in every period of history, is more especially important in our day.

Reason *cannot* ascend from nature to nature's God. The most comprehensive observation of things seen (that is phenomena), of which we can take cognizance, and the most minute analysis of things to the most remote and simple elements, leave the question of creation or the origin of things perfectly untouched and unapproached. The step from matter to mind, from things which appear to that which is the cause, spring, origin of all, is one which reason cannot take. God reveals it; we believe.

Ancient mythologies and philosophy, as well as modern science and speculation, cannot rise to the conception of the original, free and infinite cause of all things. It cannot get beyond some primeval material substratum of elementary atoms, and by tracing developments from a lower to a higher form of existence, only removes by millions and billions of years the question which lies dormant in every child's mind : Who made all things ?

Scripture announces in sublime simplicity : "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* Every house is built by some one :

* Gen. i. 1.

but He that built all things is God.* By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear; that the visible world did not arise out of phenomenal matter. God created by His Word (as we read ten times, "And God said") all things, from the highest to the lowest. He created in the beginning, and all things which have a beginning form the world or creature. To conceive of the world as without beginning is to deify it; for in and before the beginning is only God, the Father, the Word, or the Son, or the Eternal Wisdom,† and the Holy Ghost.‡ God created all things for His glory; the self-manifestation of God in the redeemed Church, of which Christ is Head, is the purpose which He purposed in Himself.

The fundamental truth of creation is unfolded in Scripture with increasing light and fulness, and as our insight into the counsel of God is enlarged, our faith takes firmer and deeper hold of this primary revelation of God's sovereignty, life, goodness, wisdom, power, and love. The doctrines of the Trinity, of man's relation to God, to angels, to the world, of redemption, of the first and second advent, of the future glory, are all most intimately

* Heb. iv. 24.

† John i. 1; Col. i. 18; Rev. iii. 14; Prov. viii. 14.

‡ Gen. i. 2.

connected with the doctrine of creation; so that here is not only the first lesson which we teach our children, but the ultimate and highest theme of adoration.* The apostle declares in our passage that the very first statement of Scripture history can only be grasped by faith. By faith we understand,† not merely that God created the world, but that He created the world by His word;‡ for as we read in Genesis, every new species was called into existence by the creative Word of God. And this view, which faith receives, it receives in order to *exclude*§ the hypothesis into which all attempts of reason to account for the origin of the world resolve themselves; viz., the things visible developed out of things phenomenal.

By faith, through revelation, we understand this. It is not by our own reason or observation that we ascend to this knowledge. It is one of those "things not seen," for the perception of which faith only is the organ, and the evidence of which is only the testimony of God apprehended by a believing mind.

* Rev. iv. 11.

† νοοῦμεν (compare Matt. xv. 17) to understand the reason and method.

‡ The apostle uses the expression *ῥήματι*, which of course is a different expression from the personal *λόγος*. But what else can be the meaning of him who, in this same epistle (i. 3), declared that God made the worlds by His Son? Though the apostle Paul does not use the word *λόγος*, he teaches the same truth as John (i. 3) in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. § *εἰς τὸ μὴ*.

Even Christians take erroneous and superficial views of this fact. They say, only a fool can deny that the world must have had a Creator. They think that the beautiful design - argument must occur to every rational mind, and have force with every rational mind. If we look at a watch and its ingenious mechanism, we never doubt that an intelligent mind contrived and a skilful hand executed the design. Can this universe, in its marvellous and stupendous structure, and with its complicated and harmonious laws, be the result of chance, or its own cause ?

Now this argument is very forcible to those whom Scripture has taught that God created. No heathen mind ascends thus from things seen to the infinite, self-existent Creator. We, whom revelation has lifted to the height of faith, are able to reach down arguments like ladders to those in the valley ; but not by such ladders did we ourselves ascend. By *faith*, and through God's word, God is known as Creator.

God did not leave man to find Him from creation, to infer His existence from His works.* He

* Compare my remarks on the necessity of the Spirit's revelation in "Christ Crucified. Lectures on 1 Cor. ii." As Pascal observed : "Scripture assures us, that in every instance, when the beauty of creation manifests its Author, it is not from the simple contemplation of natural objects, but owing to a divine illumination, which disposes the heart aright." We speak of man's unassisted reason, but it never was unassisted. The expression is correct only in a relative and limited sense. There is not merely the action of the Holy

revealed Himself, and men, knowing God, did not glorify Him as God, neither were thankful. Thus from their original knowledge of God, they by their own sin fell into idolatry; and one of the great results of this apostasy is the ignorance of man, of the most refined and gifted nations, of the most subtle and powerful intellects, of God as the Creator of the world.

Now it may be said there are many people who do not believe in the Scriptures or in Jesus, and who yet believe that God created the world. To this my answer is twofold. First, Where did they obtain this knowledge? Reason often adopts the teachings of Scripture, and then, like a conjuror, pretends to have brought them out without assistance, and out of an empty receptacle. All the philosophy of man could never have written the first verse of Genesis. But reason and science will ultimately acknowledge the first chapter of Genesis to be a perfect revelation of truth.

But my second answer is more important, though sad. What is this belief worth, this rational,

Ghost on the heart and conscience, there are not merely the traces of our original condition, but there was the primeval revelation, which left distinct marks in the traditions of antiquity. (p. 105.)

Hamann says: "To my mind, 'natural religion' is a perfect nonentity, the same as natural (self-originated) language. Unbelief is the oldest and strongest, and, next to superstition, the only 'natural religion.'"

intellectual belief, that God is the Creator—a belief independent of Scripture, and independent of the God of salvation revealed in Christ Jesus? Soon—thus the history of human thought shows us—this belief vanishes, either before the lofty and alluring speculations of Pantheism, or the powerful and fascinating science of materialism.

We find it difficult to look from earth, from things visible, from second causes, to heaven, to spiritual and eternal realities, to the Lord, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. And as civilization advances, as men who have not the love of God in their hearts become more fully acquainted with the laws of nature, the tendency to materialism becomes stronger; and, resting satisfied with the phenomenal and the secondary causes and powers, men fail to rise above the inanimate and visible unto the Fatherly heart in heaven, whose omnipotent love and wisdom day by day, hour by hour, cherishes, rules, and sustains all things.

Let me remind you of Israel's, of the Christian's or Church-faith. For as the Israelite believed in God, and waited for the advent of Messiah, so the Christian believes in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that God is; for He has spoken to us, He has loved us, He has redeemed us. He was Abraham's guest and guide, his sure portion,

and exceeding great reward. He brought Israel out of Egypt. He spoke unto the fathers as unto His chosen friends. Jehovah reveals to us, that He is the Lord, the Creator of heaven and of earth; that He made all things by the word of His power. He shows us His works; He points out their vastness, their grandeur, their beauty, their joyousness. He bids us lift up our eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. When we murmur against Him, and question the wisdom of His impenetrable dealings, He asks us, like Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" We adore in humility, we behold God's sovereignty, and we say, It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight. He shows us His wisdom, His power, His goodness in creation. When we are tempted to trust in the creature, to swerve from obedience to God's command, and to be anxious about the future, He explains to us creation—the heavens above; the sun, with its genial and joyous light; the mountains and rocks in their strength; the beneficent rain and snow which come down to earth; the mysterious seed, which brings forth fruit, as symbols of His own grace, love, faithfulness, of spiritual realities given to His people. He reveals to us that all things were made by His Son, and for

Him, who is appointed Heir of all things; that not atoms, or an original matter, but Christ, is the beginning of creation, in whom all His counsel stood before Him from all eternity. And He assures us that He will make "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

And Israel responds: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." And the Church responds: "I believe in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of heaven and earth." Israel responds: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." And the Church confesses: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him."

Israel replies: "What have I to do any more with idols?" "Cursed is he who trusteth in the arm of flesh." And the Church replies, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . . The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Israel says: "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory;" "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." The Church says: "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, and to take to Himself the

kingdom, and we shall reign with Him." Israel knows the Creator of heaven and earth as the giver of the new life, of repentance, and faith. "Turn me, and I shall be turned;" "Create in me a pure heart;" "Breathe, O Spirit, upon these slain." The Church says: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be the first-fruits of His creatures."

God is the Creator; this is the first note struck on the lyre of Revelation, with which all other strains are in harmony. It sounds throughout the whole anthem. In Christ we hear the full melody. In Him we behold both the eternal counsel of redemption, and the final consummation in glory.

He who made all things by His word has by the self-same word created us anew unto eternal glory. His promises, His sayings, are *creative* words, spirit and life. That same Almighty Father, by Christ and through the Spirit, will make new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. God is the Creator; with Him all things are possible. He calleth unto non-existent things, and they are; He doeth all in Christ, and for His glory.

Such are the apparently simple but inexhaustible

and ever-blessed revelation-truths for the sinner seeking salvation, for the Christian in affliction, in temptation; for the day of warfare, the night of sorrow, the hour of death.

God is the Creator. We say to every human being: You are not your own; Christ is the Head of every man; return unto the Lord. Glorify God with your body and spirit, which are His.

And if he says, "I cannot," we answer: God is the Creator. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. He can create a new heart, and put His Spirit within you. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

And to the doubting, afflicted, perplexed believer we say: God is the Creator. "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding." And again: "Behold the fowls of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. Are ye not much better than they?" "Shall not God much more feed and clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And again, God has made and upheld all things great and small. The very

hairs of your head are numbered. He that made the heart, shall He not know all its fears and its sorrows! Commit the keeping of your souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

And to the backslider, the lukewarm and world-loving, we say: Hast thou forgotten God, the Creator? and trustest and lovest and seekest thou the creature more than the Lord, putting thy trust and delight in uncertain riches? To the Laodicean, Christ speaks, as the beginning of the creation of God.

And to the dying, in his faintness, we say: God is the Creator; and we know that if this our earthly tent be taken to pieces, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now may the eternal and the omnipotent, the faithful and all-wise Creator, who by the precious blood of Christ His Son has redeemed us, and by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Word has renewed us and grafted us into the living Vine, keep us through faith unto the glory and reward of the inheritance at the appearing of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ABEL, ENOCH, NOAH.

HEBREWS xi. 4-7.

ISRAEL was pre-eminently to be an historical people.* They were always exhorted to remember and to consider their history. It was their solemn duty to cherish the memory of the past. The remembrance of the wonderful dealings of God was to be perpetuated from generation to generation. The Jewish nation lived in the remembrance of its early history. The annual

* The difference in this respect between Israel and the other nations of antiquity is very marked. Bunsen says, "Historical writing was born in Israel." Niebuhr remarks that "the Old Testament is the only exception to the general patriotic untruthfulness of the other nations. It never disguises or passes over the reverses of the people of which it treats. Its truthfulness is the highest in historical literature. . . . The Old Testament is also the most accurate of all historical sources." It should be added that the Old Testament not merely records faithfully all calamities and defeats which Israel had to suffer, but where is there a national record which narrates and censures the national sins with such unsparing severity, which is thoroughly free from national conceit and self-righteousness, which lays the axe at the root of all pride and self-exaltation? I do not know any history except this one which announces on every page, We are a stiff-necked and rebellious people; and it is only owing to divine mercy and long-suffering that we are preserved

festivals, the constantly-recurring sabbath-days, the very names of God, kept the fundamental facts of their marvellous history before their minds, and impressed them on their hearts. The children were encouraged to ask questions both in reference to memorial services and to memorial stones and institutions.* “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.”† The whole book of Deuteronomy is a review of the past. Many psalms contain a synopsis of Jewish history from the days of Abraham to the election of David, whom the Lord took from the sheep-folds, and made king over Israel. Such psalms are either didactic in form, and inscribed *Maschil*, or lyrical songs of praise, extolling the ever-enduring mercy of the Lord. All the prophets were filled with a vivid and constant consciousness of Israel’s past history. In their addresses to the people, and in their communion with God, the memory of Jehovah’s past dealings with Israel is ever with them.‡ Take for instance the sublime prayer of Daniel.§ He refers to the books of Moses and the prophecy of Jeremiah; but how full of life and concrete reality is the Scripture to him! He is

* Exod. xii. 26; Gen. xviii. 19; Josh. iv. 6, 7.

† Deut. xxxii. 7.

‡ Josh. xxiii. xxiv.; 1 Sam. xii. 6.

§ Dan. ix.

himself in the current of divine history. Here all is of God, and supernatural; and yet here all is perfect liberty, and out of the inmost depths of the heart gush forth the confessions and ardent, importunate petitions of the loving patriot.

To remember the past, and to wait for the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, was the attitude of God's children; thus Malachi concludes by pointing back to God's servant Moses on mount Horeb, and by pointing forwards to Elijah preparing the advent of Jehovah. For this is Israel's peculiarity, that the past is connected with a great and glorious future; that memory and hope dwell together in unity; that the older days are viewed not with regret but with the joyous anticipation of a coming era, fulfilling all the promise given in the morning of their history.

It is natural that this historical character of the Jewish mind should manifest itself most fully during a period of transition and crisis. The advent of the Lord was the turning-point in Israel's history. Hence the gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogical summary of Jewish history from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonish captivity, and from the exile to Mary, the mother of our Lord. Hence the historical character of the songs of Zechariah, of Mary, and of aged Simeon. After the death and

resurrection of the Lord, the Jewish nation was still further tested by having the gospel preached unto them. And as the future development of Israel depended upon their acceptance or rejection of the divine message, we notice in the apostolic preaching always a reference to their past history and a solemn declaration that Israel had now arrived at the most important and awful crisis. The apostles recapitulated the past history of Israel, and showed the coming, the death, and resurrection of Jesus to be the culminating events of the dealings of God with the chosen nation. All the addresses of the apostles Peter and Paul, recorded in the book of Acts, are historical and not doctrinal. The living God, who had brought Israel up to this point, was now sending the gospel of His Son Jesus to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.*

The apostles called upon the nation to believe in Him of whom all their prophets had testified,

* It is difficult for us fully to realize the historical and national character of the apostolic preaching to Israel. In the new covenant dispensation our thoughts are directed chiefly to truth in its eternal aspect. We meditate on the love of God, the grace of the Saviour, the indwelling of the Spirit, on the soul's relation to Christ, and on our union with Him in the coming glory. This is right, and yet there is a danger of substituting an abstract and doctrinal method for the concrete and historical method of Scripture, according to which the remembrance of Jesus, and the expectation of His return and kingdom, form the main elements of Christian teaching and life.

in whom the covenant was made with Abraham, and who was now in heaven waiting for the restitution of all things. It was the burning question of the day; the turning-point in Israel's history. Hence we can understand the speech of Stephen. In the face of death, and beholding by faith the glory of God, so that even to his enemies his countenance appeared irradiated by a heavenly beauty, Stephen addresses the rulers of the nation; and in this most solemn moment, and in the plenitude of the spirit, what is his address? *He surveys the Jewish history.* Calmly, deliberately, and with great fulness, he narrates the story of Abraham's call, and of Joseph's sufferings and exaltation, and of the youth of Moses, his flight into Midian, and of Israel's exodus and wanderings in the wilderness, and of David and Solomon. This is not the place to explain his selection of events and characters and the scope of his address; the only point of importance is the fact that Stephen at such a time dwelt on the past history of Israel; he speaks not of doctrines, but of history, facts, and the past dealings of God with the nation. How strong, how vivid, how ever-present must that past have been to the believers of the apostolic age!

In our chapter the past history of Israel is brought before us in a similar manner. The universal character of God's chosen people, and of

the Scripture which records their history, is seen in many ways ; and perhaps the most obvious is the fact, that as its prophecy comprehends all nations, so its history begins not with Abraham, but with Noah and with Adam ; thus showing from the outset that it is a revelation for mankind, and of the dealings of God with man, and concerning the whole race. It is on account of this connection of Israel with the whole race that Jesus charges Jerusalem with all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias.* And as the genealogy of our blessed Lord is traced not merely to Abraham, but to Adam, so is the history of Abraham's seed traced to the pre-Abrahamic believers.†

In this remarkable history, extending over so many centuries, there is a wonderful unity. It records God's dealings with man ; and as God is unchangeable, and the human heart the same in every age, this history speaks to all times and

* Matt. xxiii. 35.

† This portion of the book of Genesis must have appeared in a new light to the Jews, as the gospel in its universal character and world-wide application became dear to them. The references of our Lord to this section of the Word are very numerous ; to the institution of marriage in Paradise, to Cain and Abel, to Noah, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to Lot's wife. Again the patriarchal history appeared in a new light to the apostle Paul, as the history of our fathers, before the law came as a parenthesis and schoolmaster.

nations ; it is the most human history, as well as the most divine. This peculiarity of Scripture has been acknowledged by poets and philosophers ; it has been felt by all nations and ages. There is no history, there are no characters with which the world has become so familiar, which have so wrought themselves into the very consciousness and heart of mankind.

But the Christian regards this characteristic from a higher point. "To the spiritually-minded, time and place are not. The Word of God is therefore, when spiritually apprehended, no history of successive generations having reference to various countries and divers persons. It becomes a living whole—a picture of the dealings of God with man ; of the great contest between good and evil ; of the victory over evil by men in whom Christ dwells, and who hold communion with God."

Before the flood and the Abrahamic covenant God had a people on earth who lived by faith. Abel the first martyr, Enoch the seventh from Adam, and Noah the preacher of righteousness, are the three witnesses of this period whose lives are recorded. In Abel we behold faith's accepted sacrifice and worship ; in Enoch faith's walk and triumphant ascension ; in Noah faith's reverent, persevering obedience, and testimony. It is only with reference to this central grace of

faith that we have here to consider these three characters.

The first believer who is brought before us in this gallery of God's saints is Abel, the shepherd, beloved of God; but hated without cause for righteousness' sake by his brother. He is a type of the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom His brethren hated, because—and not merely, although—there was no guile in Him. Jesus calls him "righteous Abel," and speaks of him as the first martyr, whose blood was shed in witness of God's truth. There is no figure in sacred Scripture so vividly impressed on our imagination from childhood. On the threshold of history we behold this silent, believing martyr. There is scarcely any incident here of man's doing, and yet it is full of instruction, full of testimony glorifying God. He brought a sacrifice, he worshipped, he was accepted, he died, and this by faith.

He was the first of the human family who tasted death. Fallen in Adam, he died; through Cain's sin he suffered death; but through faith in the sin-offering he overcame death. The first man, who had to descend into the grave, was carried through it on the arms of redeeming love. The first son of Adam, who had to experience the divine sentence pronounced against sin, was to angels, and, may I say, to the Son of God

Himself, a type of the great sacrifice of divine love to be fulfilled in the appointed time. Faith from the first rested in the Lamb of God. Between the revelation of God, the Creator, to Adam, and the first witness and example of faith, Abel, lies a catastrophe, a change, important, mysterious, and awful, which we can never understand, though in the sweet light of revelation, we can now think of it without despair. It is the fall of man, the entrance of sin and death into the world of man. Hence man cannot approach, worship, love and serve God without sacrifice. The Creator, the paternal and bountiful Lord, is also the Governor and Lawgiver; in holiness is His reign, and in justice and truth stands His kingdom. God Himself provided the remedy, and revealed the mediation. The eternal thought of the Three-One, love manifested in mercy through a Substitute, was declared to man before he was banished from Paradise. God gave the promise. God also gave the type of righteousness through the Substitute's death, when He clothed our fallen and guilty parents. The Lord covered them with the robe of righteousness. Abel, believing the word, approached God through the better sacrifice. In the book of Genesis we are simply told the facts, that "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Here we

have the explanation of the fact. What caused Abel to bring his offering? what else but faith? He believed that God is the Creator, the Lord, the source of all life and blessing; and how could he believe it without desiring to be in communion with Him? He believed that God is holy, that man is sinful and guilty; how then could he dare to come before God, or to appear with his sins, and with his imperfect and sin-stained gifts and works? He believed that God is love, gracious, and merciful, and that through sacrifice, through the suffering of a Redeemer yet to come, through the substitution of an innocent and pure life for his own forfeited one, God the just would justify and accept the guilty. Because he believed he brought the appointed sacrifice. Behold, the sacrifice is accepted, and Abel is declared righteous—righteous according to God's estimate, according to the perfection of that Sacrifice, of which Abel beheld only the symbol.*

Every one who believes in Jesus Christ, is an accepted worshipper. There is *no other* true and spiritual worship but the worship of a believer in

* When it is so frequently asserted that the reason why Abel's sacrifice was accepted was solely because it was offered in faith, it seems to be forgotten that faith consisted in the very fact that Abel offered *the God-appointed sacrifice*, and thereby showed his humility as a sinner, and his trust in divine mercy as a believer. The object of the apostle here is, however, not to teach the doctrine of expiation, but the character of faith.

Jesus, and this worship is *always* accepted. Let us therefore not speak doubtfully, whether God will accept our "poor prayers." We believe that God cannot accept us as we are in ourselves, for He cannot acquit the guilty and accept anything except perfection; but if we believe in Jesus, God accepts us in Him. His blood was shed for the remission of our sins. By His offering He has perfected us for ever. Of this, the only worship, Abel though dead yet speaketh. And of this also, that though God loves us dearly in His own Son, yet sufferings and affliction may be our portion. We who accept the sacrifice must be willing to become a sacrifice, and to know the fellowship of His sufferings.

The sinner, who through faith in the sacrifice is righteous before God, belongs now to God, and is an heir of eternal life. Sin and death have no more dominion over him. Thus Enoch, the seventh from Adam, walks with God. In this simple familiar expression, we have the description of the new life. It brings before us communion with God, dependence on His guidance, submission to His authority, confidence in His love and favour, continuous, habitual fellowship, and a mind conformed to God's mind, and delighting itself in the Lord. How can two walk together except they be agreed? God was Enoch's constant and loving companion, Lord, and strength. Enoch pleased

God, and why? Because he trusted Him. He trusted Him as a *reality*, believing that He is, and as a faithful and loving God, the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. Enoch walked with God *only*; for as his own prophecy, preserved to us by the Spirit in the epistle of Jude, shows, ungodliness was the characteristic of his age, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." Living in an age of ungodliness, of violent and defiant unbelief, Enoch not merely kept himself unspotted from the world, and communed with the Most High, but he was a bold and intrepid confessor, and declared the future things which he apprehended by faith. The contemplative and spiritually-minded believer is also a witness. The life which is hid in God must manifest itself also in conflict with the world. The disciple who rests on the bosom of Jesus is afterwards banished for his testimony. No doubt Enoch had to experience the opposition and hatred of an unbelieving age. As a lily among thorns, so was Enoch among the children of men; God regarded him with delight, because he lived by faith.

The constant repetition of the words, "and he died," in the fifth chapter of Genesis, is very striking. Although the duration of human life

was still exceedingly long, as if the forfeited blessing of immortality was reluctantly leaving mankind, yet it is evident that, through the disobedience of one, death passed upon all men. But to show that the believer is not under the dominion of death, God took Enoch away and translated him into the eternal, peaceful region. "He was not; for God took Him." His life was short compared with those of his cotemporaries, and this must have rendered his translation the more remarkable. Without seeing death he passed to the immortal state. Enoch and Elijah are types of the ascension of our Lord, an illustration of the truth, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Thus shall it be when Christ comes; they who are living by faith at a time of which Christ says, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, transfigured in their bodies, glorified and beatified in a "moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And we all, who believe, belong no more to death. Christ has destroyed, that is, rendered powerless to us-ward, him who had the power of death, that is, Satan; Christ has taken away the sting of death; dying we do not see or taste death, but we see and taste Jesus, the life of our life, our eternal life.

Abel testifies of faith's sacrifice and worship, always accepted. Enoch of faith's walk and

triumph, lifted above sin and death into fellowship with the holy God, the Lord of life. Noah's faith has again another testimony. He found grace—first time the word is used in Scripture—in the eyes of the Lord. The judgment of the flood was announced to him. Moved with fear—not the fear of terror, but the fear of reverence, of humility, and of trembling astonishment, both at the impending judgment and condescending mercy of God, he obeyed and built the ark. The element of true repentance was in that fear, as it must always be in faith; for Noah was a sinner, and in believing the judgment of God he acknowledged also his own unworthiness and guilt. Only a deep sense of sin could have acknowledged the justice and believed the approach of judgment. His faith, rooted in the contrite heart, and evidenced in his daily work and obedience, was tested by the opposition and mockery of the world, to whom he testified of sin, of judgment, of saving grace; declaring what he possessed himself, righteousness by faith. And by his faith he not merely saved himself, but also his household.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, are a threefold type both of Christ and of the believer. Jesus is the righteous One, Shepherd and Lamb, the Martyr, true and faithful Witness. He is put to death because He was holy, and His brethren were wicked.

But Jesus, who died, is like Enoch, who after his walk with God is taken up to heavenly regions. He liveth now to God. And Jesus is like Noah, who saves the household, so that the punitive judgment on sinners does not reach them; but they dwell safely in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty.

If we possess Abel's faith in the Lamb of God, then the history of our life and death can be summed up as Abel's—a sinner, who worshipped, who was accepted, who entered heaven through faith in the blood of the atonement. If God permits us to continue our life on earth, we walk with God—our light, our strength, our law, our consolation, and our joy. Walking with Him, we please Him, notwithstanding all our sinfulness and errors; our citizenship is in heaven; we belong to the realm of light, and when Christ comes we shall be taken by divine power, and delivered in a moment from earth's trials and the bondage of mortality. And, like Noah, looking forward to the fulfilment of the prophetic word, and possessing ourselves the righteousness which is by faith, we testify and call to the world: Flee from the wrath to come.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PATRIARCHS.

HEBREWS xi. 8-22.

WITH the election of Abraham commences a new period in the history of revelation. Hitherto God's dealings had been with mankind as one family; but after the destruction of the tower of Babel, mankind was divided into languages and nations. That tower was the expression of a deep-seated apostasy, a type of the God-defying infidelity which in the last days shall rise against the Lord and His anointed. Judgment was sent, and, as we notice in all God's dealings, judgment according to His infinite wisdom preparing greater manifestations of redeeming love.

The origin of nations, apparently coincident with the beginning of idolatry, is the occasion of the election of Abraham, to be the father of a divinely-given nation, which was to be the witness of God and the channel of His revelation. And the other nations, though for a season left in ignorance, are reserved, to be brought by Jesus

the Son of Abraham unto the knowledge of God, and the unity of peace.

Since mankind is now divided into nations, salvation is ultimately to be brought to mankind by a nation. Hence the restoration of humanity, which we yet await, shall be through the medium of Israel. The promises shall be fulfilled, when all nations of the earth, with Israel, and round Israel as a centre, fear the Lord, and confess Him with one accord in unity of spirit.*

This chosen nation must needs have a peculiar origin and character. It is to show forth God's praise; it is to bring to fallen, helpless, guilty humanity God's salvation. Now, as Christ the Saviour, though true man, must come from above, as He is God-given and conceived by the Holy Ghost, though born of the Virgin Mary, so Israel, the nation, must likewise have a supernatural character. As Jesus among men, so Israel among nations—He a real and true man, yet God's Son; they a real nation, with a true human history and development, but different from all other nations in the manner in which God by direct interference originates them, forms them, and gives them His guidance.

The election of Abraham and the birth of Isaac show at once the supernatural character of Israel's

* Compare my Lecture on Heathenism in "Christ and the Church: the Apostolic Commission."

history. Their history throughout is an embodiment of the principle, "Salvation is of God." It illustrates the contrasts of divine omnipotence, and the utter weakness of nature; the promise of grace, and the utter inadequacy of the present actual condition; heavenly treasure in earthen vessels, worm Jacob, God-conquering Israel. Abraham, nearly a hundred years old, and childless, is to be the father of a multitude like the stars of heaven; the dwellers in tents, who have to purchase a burial-place for Sara, the inheritors of the land; nay, heirs of the world. Such from the beginning was the contrast, stamped upon, infused into the God-chosen people.

Now, what else but *faith* could bridge over these contrasts? How could Israel have any other life than the life of *faith*? What was their history but a continuous declaration: With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible? From the song of Hannah to the song of Mary, Israel was in the low estate of the hand-maiden, and God, who is mighty, did great things to her. The same principle is declared by the gospel. The life of the apostle Paul eminently illustrates the kindred truth, that Christians have been crucified with Christ, and die daily; but, raised by Divine power, walk in newness of life before God.

Why does God call Himself so frequently and

with such peculiar emphasis the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? It was not on account of their excellence, because there are many other saints of the old covenant who are equal to them in faith and devotedness. God never calls Himself the God of Moses, of David, or of Daniel. He calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they are the fathers, unto whom He revealed Himself as the Covenant-God, and unto whom He gave the threefold promise of the nation, the Seed, or Messiah, and the land of inheritance. God's promise to the fathers, the relation in which He stood to them, was the foundation on which the confidence and hope of Israel rested; with the invocation of this Name they drew near. And since this covenant is for all ages, and centres in the salvation which is by Jesus Christ, God, in calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is revealing a name which can never lose its importance and significance. Jesus the Son of Abraham has come, and Israel, fallen through unbelief, is still reserved for the ultimate fulfilment of the promise at His second advent. Then shall the promise be fulfilled to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that which they never saw during their life, but realized by faith, shall then be revealed.

The thoughts and ways of God are indeed very different from our thoughts and ways; and

even after they are revealed in Scripture, man is slow to receive divine teaching. The history of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is received as a very instructive record of the past, and as illustrating spiritual truths; but few recognise the covenant with Abraham as the basis of history, and look forward to the fulfilment when, according to God's promise, all nations shall be blessed with God's chosen nation Israel. Hence the apostle calls it a mystery; that is, something which man could not discover without divine revelation, but which he is anxious the Gentile Christians should understand. The unbelief of Israel, rejecting the Lord of glory, has made no change in the divine counsel. For a season Israel as a nation is rejected and scattered; they are dead—cut off. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. What He promised to Abraham, what He announced by all the prophets, can never be revoked. Messiah, the land, and the glory, are theirs. Jehovah-Shammah must yet be the name of Jerusalem. From Zion shall go forth the law of light and love and peace to all the nations. Israel's resurrection shall be the regeneration of the earth. As was typified by all deliverances from captivities, the ultimate deliverance shall be wrought by Jehovah Himself, and Israel shall be glorified, and the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. As

the angel, descending from the heavenly heights, and declaring the divine counsel, announced unto Mary, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

See then what significance this name has, and shall have as long as sun, moon, and stars endure; for as God said through Jeremiah, "If those ordinances depart from before me, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." Thus through the millennial ages Israel shall praise God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and all Gentile nations shall thus praise God, and rejoice in the world-wide covenant made with these fathers; and the patriarchs themselves shall behold with joy the fulfilment of the promise—the land of blessing, the whole earth of blessing, until finally the city descends from heaven, and the tabernacle of God is for ever with man.

Jesus is of the seed of David, of the seed of Abraham.* Israel is chosen in Him for all ages. Israel's history has scarcely yet begun. The faithful Israelites, the kernel of the nation, though a minority, waited, believed, hoped. At the first coming of the Messiah the nation rejected Him, yet a remnant according to the election of grace

* Matt. i.

believed. Throughout the period of Israel's national unbelief and dispersion, there are at all times some who as representatives of the true seed believe; but the real history of Israel, according to the eternal counsel and the prediction of prophets, and the announcement of the angel Gabriel, has not commenced yet. The land is Palestine, the King is Jesus, the Son of David; the beginning of the reign is the return of Jesus, when His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives, and when He shall pour out the Holy Ghost upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. After this Israel shall never turn back. Their true David shall reign over them, and all nations shall rejoice with the Lord's people.

Thus the history recorded in the book of Genesis contains the outlines of the world's history. It is not an ancient or antiquated narrative of events which have served their end, but it is the foundation upon which rests the yet future history of earth. The next direct interference of God, the next personal and visible manifestation of Jesus, will introduce a new period of *national* and *earthly* history. It will not be the end of the world's history, and commencement of a heavenly and endless eternity; we are waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven to fulfil the promises given to the fathers, and by the prophets, concerning Israel and the nations.

How clear and striking is the reply which our Saviour gave to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection from among the dead! "Ye do err greatly," the Lord, the heavenly wisdom, said unto them, "because you know not the Scriptures, the written Word and revelation, nor the power of God, by the inward experience of the Holy Ghost." But how does Jesus prove from Scripture the resurrection? There are many passages which we should have deemed much more appropriate, such as Joseph giving commandment concerning his bones; or such passages in the prophet Isaiah "Thy dead men shall live;" or the prediction in Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The Lord goes, however, to the very root of the question. God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long after they had died; and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

They to whom God vouchsafed to reveal His name, whom He drew into communion with Himself, with whom He established His covenant, must needs possess a life which death cannot terminate or extinguish. Knowing and loving God, known and loved of Him, they possessed even in time life eternal; and since the everlasting God called Himself *their* God, immortality

was theirs. And not merely immortality, but *resurrection*; for redemption must be connected with resurrection, as sin is connected with death, and moreover the promise of the covenant referred to the land; and as the psalmist and prophets, so the patriarchs looked beyond the grave to the time when the meek shall inherit the earth.

The period of the patriarchs has a very peaceful and lovely character. God appeared and spoke to them. There was as yet no law. God revealed Himself, and simply said: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." The word "patriarchal" has in all languages of Christianized nations the meaning of simple, childlike, transparent, peaceful. But this character attaches more or less to all nations in the early stage of their history. What is the real peculiarity of the patriarchal life? What else but *faith*; that they lived before and with God, waiting for the promise, the heavenly country? They were not worldly, they were other-worldly. God was a very present God to them; while the future, the tabernacle of God on earth with man, was their constant hope.

Abraham is the father of the faithful; and he is also the model of a believer. His faith is recorded that we also may learn from it the nature, energy, trial, and victory of faith. How great is this man, called the friend of God, the father of all them that believe, the father of us all (Jews

and Gentiles) who trust in the living God. How great is the honour of Abraham when the apostle says: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* God, who chose him to this eminent position, appointed him also to be to us an example of faith. First, in obeying the call of God, to leave his kindred and to go whither he knew not; secondly, in believing impossibilities, looking away from facts simply to the promise of God; thirdly, in cherishing the God-given promise of the land though as yet only a stranger and pilgrim; fourthly, in sacrificing the visible fulfilment of the promise, believing that God would bring Isaac from the dead.

Abraham's faith was the substance of future things hoped for, and a conviction of things not seen. It triumphed over reason; it laughed at impossibilities; it looked beyond death and the long night of the intermediate state; and in all this it gave glory to God; for this is the only glory we

* James ii. 23; Rom. iv. 11-16; Gal. iii. 26-29. *Sara's* faith is also mentioned. At first she doubted, but then she "also" received the promise. As Eve is the mother of all living, Sara is the mother of the faithful. (1 Peter iii. 5, 6.) She symbolizes "Jerusalem which is above and free, and the mother of us all." (Gal. iv. 26, 27.) God spoke of her: "I will bless her: yea, I will bless her." (Gen. xvii. 16-19, xviii. 10.) And she received the word by faith. She is the only woman in Scripture whose age is recorded. A whole chapter is devoted to the narration of her burial.

can give to God, believing that He can and will do what He promised.

To leave home and kindred, and to go forth into a new land, was at that time common enough among Shemitic tribes ; but to do this in obedience to the call of God, and in sole reliance on His guidance and help, was the obedience of faith. Abraham was called to become a servant of God, and to found a society of men, whose centre was to be God . they were gathered round the name of the Lord, and His worship and service. The reward which was promised him was, that God would make him the father of a great nation, and that God's blessing would come through that nation to all the earth. Only faith could even understand this reward ; for only faith knows what it is to be blessed of God. Only faith could grasp the promise ; for reason could only reject it. Reason, considering the circumstances, could only stagger at the promise. But this was the excellence and strength of Abraham's faith, that he did *not* consider his own body now dead ; that he did not reason ; that he did not look at difficulties and impossibilities ; but that he honoured God by "being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." "If you would believe," says Luther, "you must crucify the question, How?" To believe God when reason says it may be so, and when sight

says it is possible and likely, is not to honour God; for under these conditions you would believe any one. But if you cannot look away entirely from difficulties to God's promise, then look first at God's promise; and in the light of God's Word consider your difficulties, and see them vanquished.

How sorely was Abraham's faith tried! How long had he to wait for the fulfilment of the promise! Meanwhile, though living in tents, and though **not** possessing any portion of the land, and knowing that in this life he would not see it, yet he believed the inheritance was his; and that God Himself had prepared a city, a permanent, substantial, organized dwelling-place for him and his seed, and all the nations to whom the blessing was to come. He and his sons after him waited for that country, which would be heavenly in its character, given and established by divine power. It is not necessary here to enter into a distinction between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem;* the expectation of the patriarchs and the prophets

* As is remarked by Delitzsch, the promise given unto the fathers never goes beyond Canaan as their future home and inheritance; not even when Jacob calls the place where God appeared unto him the gate of heaven, does the divine promise go beyond the land "upon which thou sleepest." The apostle applies New Testament language to the faith of the fathers, because in substance their desire was after the promised permanent inheritance, in which God in His glory and love will be their everlasting portion. Compare the concluding remarks of Lecture xviii.

is the renewed earth in which Israel and all nations dwell in righteousness—the prospect stretches forth into the boundless ages when ultimately the tabernacle of God shall be with men. The patriarch's hope reached beyond death, and it had reference to themselves and their children and all the righteous, they expected that God would give to them and their seed the earth, that they would live then before and with God in their inheritance, and that from this centre blessings would flow to all lands. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall *inherit*"—because chosen of God unto adoption—the earth."

In this hope of Messiah and Messiah's inheritance, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph lived and died. As illustrations of their faith, the apostle refers to their last acts of blessing. It is only by faith that we can bless; for God alone is the fountain of blessing, and it is only in communion with Him, and in reliance on His promise, that men are able to pronounce benediction. The fathers, realizing the fulfilment of the promise, treated *the future possession as if it was theirs already*, and disposed of it, as the Spirit directed them, by their last will and blessing. It is this firm and assured conviction of the future things, the things hoped for, that is so strikingly illustrated in the last words of the patriarchs. Isaac looked to God alone, and to His will and promise. The weakness and sin

of Jacob in obtaining the blessing did not disturb Isaac's conviction that he had declared the will of God, which man's unfaithfulness and unworthiness cannot frustrate.

Jacob also, at the end of his long and weary pilgrimage, during which the Angel, the Redeemer, had been his guide and shepherd, blessed the sons of Joseph; and here again faith, and not sight or reason, caused him to give the greater blessing to the younger. "I have waited for thy salvation" was Jacob's exclamation; and worshipping,* adoring the Lord, who had redeemed him from all evil, he died.

The apostle does not speak of Joseph's varied life, but his faith shone forth brightly in his last injunction. Future things hoped for were present and certain to him. He knew God would remember His people in their affliction, and fulfil the promise given to Abraham; and he was anxious to show that his heart was with the children of Jacob, and that the blessing of the God of Abraham was his joy and hope.†

To return to Abraham. His faith was tested still more severely. He was called to offer up Isaac his son, his only son, the son in whom all his affections centred. But the natural affection of a father to his child was in this case inseparably connected with Abraham's whole spiritual life. In

* Gen. xlix. 18. † Compare Gen. l. 25; Josh. xxiv. 32.

Isaac was the promise. All the hopes and expectations of faith centred in him. To offer up Isaac was to sacrifice the very object of faith. Here God seemed to contradict Himself—to take away His own gift, to revoke His promise. And here faith saw what reason could not see. Faith perceived the hidden meaning of the command. It was to *try faith*. Before Isaac's birth Abraham simply believed God's Word. Faith had no outward help; it rested solely on God's promise. Now Isaac was given, faith's object had become visible, and hence there was not the same exclusive leaning on God. The Lord tested Abraham when He commanded him to offer up Isaac. It was faith's wisdom which recognized the command as a temptation from God. Now this is the believer's experience. God takes from us that which by faith was first obtained, because we make a Christ of it, because we rest in our faith, in our peace, in our conversion, in our experience. God teaches us that we must believe in Him always, as we believed in Him at our conversion, when we had nothing else to trust in but His Word. All gifts obtained by faith have to be given up unto death, and that by faith.

But Abraham believed again, as at first. Isaac's non-existence was no difficulty to him when the promise first came; and now *Isaac's death* is no difficulty. God can bring him again from the

dead. This Abraham believed as the only solution of the difficulty; for God's word must be fulfilled; and since Isaac is to be offered up, the Lord God Almighty will surely raise him from the dead.

What depth of self-searching, what agony, what crucifixion this trial involved, who can describe? Here was indeed a summing-up of all his previous life and conflict of faith. But faith conquered, and in faith, love and hope. For when we believe God, and only then, and only in that proportion, we love God, and do not withhold from Him the most cherished heart-object, and when we believe God, we hope even against hope; as Luther says, "I could run into Christ's arms though He had a sharp sword in each hand." Abraham received back Isaac in a figure—a figure of the resurrection of Jesus, the consummation of Israel's history; resurrection-life after death and burial; the pledge and source of our incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance.

Children of God, on whom the blessing of Abraham has come through Jesus Christ, live by faith! Crucify reason, consider not the things which are visible; confess, manifest it by your character and walk, that you are strangers on earth; wait for the heavenly country, living even now in the spirit of the golden millennial age. Learn from Abraham to believe in God that raised

up Jesus from the dead. Reason sees your guilt ; faith sees your acquittal, for Christ is risen ; reason sees your sinfulness and infirmity ; faith sees your power and strength in newness of life, for Christ is risen ; reason sees your affliction, sickness, sorrow, old age, and death ; but faith sees your glory, renewal of youth, joy, and strength everlasting, for Christ is risen. Live in *tents* ; set not your affections on things below. *Live* in the tents the patriarchal life of prayer, and a reverent filial walk with God. When the soul is cast down and disquieted within you, when the heart is heavy, when Isaac, in whom you delight, faith's child, is to be sacrificed, then believe, hope in God, and know that you shall yet praise Him. Thus we give glory to God.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MOSES.

HEBREWS xi. 23-29.

OF all the great men whom God raised up in Israel, there is none whom the nation regarded with a more profound veneration than Moses. By him they were brought out of Egypt; through him they received the law. During forty years he ruled in Jeshurun, combining prophetic, priestly, and royal dignity. They owed to him, under God, all that was precious to them as a nation. There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; who had assigned to him the position of mediator, of a servant in all God's house. And as his position was wonderful, his character also was marvellous. In him we see the majesty of a solemn, God-fearing, and chastened man, whose soul was constantly dwelling apart in the adoration of the Most High, combined with a most singular meekness, and a most fervent and self-denying affection. His love to God shines forth in his love to Israel, which forgave, hoped, endured all

things; which ingratitude never weakened, and disappointment never blunted. We see in this man of God courage and gentleness, fortitude and patience—zeal for God's glory and motherly meekness towards the people. He bore the image of Him who afterwards came to Israel the perfect manifestation of divine love.

His words also seem to surpass all other prophetic words in grandeur, lucid simplicity, and power. And the five books which bear his name, as they are unequalled in all literature in their beauty and majesty, became the most cherished treasure of his nation.

It is most interesting that Scripture gives us a picture of Moses, from his infancy to his departure. The Scripture biography of some great men begins with their manhood. We do not know anything of the early course of their lives. Thus we read abruptly of Elijah the Tishbite, appearing with a prophetic announcement. But in the case of Samuel, of David, of our blessed Lord Himself, we are told the history of their childhood and youth. Now the apostle, in reviewing the life of Moses, wishes to show us that it was the life of faith. And thus the history of Moses is to testify of righteousness by faith, though he is the lawgiver. In like manner Paul often proved, that the law was only given to point out the righteousness which is by faith.

Faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, faith in the divine promise, enabled the parents of Moses to look away from the king's commandment, and to confide in the unseen God, and to realize the promised future. Thus was his life preserved by an act of faith in the power and mercy of the covenant God.

Brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh as her son, instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, the faith which was in his father and mother, and of which they doubtless constantly testified to him, seemed to be in an uncongenial atmosphere, and exposed to most adverse influences. But when he was come to years, when he reached the age in which the world with its attractive beauty is fully appreciated by the youthful heart, it was then that his faith was not eclipsed, but manifested, not shipwrecked, but, as it were, consummated; it was then that the good seed which for years had quietly been cherished by the divine Spirit in his soul sprung up in most lovely flower; the riches and honours of the world had not choked it.

The only free man of his nation, the only son of Abraham, who need not have called him a Hebrew, he voluntarily made the choice; he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. His heart was with God, and with God's people he would take his position. Abraham was called

to *leave* his kindred, Moses was called to *join* his kindred. In both cases the choice was the same—equally free, equally difficult.

Moses gave up the *world*; ambition had the prospect of honour and greatness; the culture of the most civilized state was fascinating to the mind; treasure and wealth held out potent allurements. All this—and does it not comprise “all that is in the world,” and in its most attractive and elevated manner?—Moses gave up. And, on the other side, what awaited him? To join a down-trodden nation of slaves, whose only riches was the promise of the invisible God.

As the choice of Moses was perfectly free, so we enquire with greater interest, What was it which determined the choice? And here we might at first fancy it was the impulse of a generous and patriotic heart, which espoused the cause of the suffering and despised race. Such a feeling is indeed noble, but we may doubt whether it would have been strong enough to make the sacrifices which Moses made; and whether it would not have preferred the path of worldly wisdom and policy, and sought to ameliorate the people's condition by securing first a position of power and influence. The Scripture and the subsequent history prove that it was *faith* which made the choice. Not reason, not sentiment, but the mysterious clinging of the heart to

the promise of God, the realizing of things not seen, and the confident expectation of the future reward. Moses chose to suffer affliction with Israel, not because they were his people, but because they were *God's* people. The object of his choice was God; the God who chose his fathers, who revealed to them His truth and grace, and commanded them to walk before Him without fear; the God who was not ashamed to be called their God, and to whom he had been dedicated in his infancy.

We call this choice free, because Moses was in the anomalous position of an Israelite at the court of Pharaoh severed from the bondage and the reproach of his nation. But it was free in a yet higher sense. For in choosing God as the object of our love and service, the heart for the first time becomes free. Mysterious as this act is, this turning-point in the history of the soul, we know that it is the birth of our liberty; that it is really the first act of perfect liberty, of conscious liberty, the first act in which the soul, looking down into its depths as into a transparent lake, does what it wills to do. "I will arise and go to my Father." I will love and serve God. I will confess Christ. I will be the Lord's. And so God makes us "willing," and sets us free; and here is the great triumph of divine power in its wisdom and love. We *cannot* but obey God, yet we freely turn to God. Necessity and liberty are blended. The

choice was made by faith; and that which was attractive to faith was the very thing which to reason and nature is repulsive—the reproach of Christ. It is the cross, which is a magnet, drawing the heart.

There seems an anachronism in the expression “the reproach of Christ.” But the expression is chosen purposely. We know that the outgoings of Messiah were from of old. In the sacrifice of Isaac, in the humiliation of Joseph, in the sufferings of Israel, we see foreshadows of the perfect Servant, who was to be both the Sufferer and the Redeemer of His people. “Out of Egypt have I called my Son.” Israel is a type of Christ. The ancient Jewish teachers spoke of the pangs and sorrows of Messiah, and divided them into three—those which He would suffer Himself, those which would be endured by His people before and by His people after the advent. Thus as the apostle speaks of filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his body for his body’s sake, Moses by faith beheld in Israel’s sufferings, and those that awaited him, the reproach of the true Israel, Israel’s glory and hope, the Messiah.*

* Compare 1 Cor. x. 4; 1 Peter i. 10. Christ, as the Word, the Messenger of the covenant, was *with Israel*. The coming Christ was also typified by Israel; hence the typical meaning of Israel’s sufferings, of Joseph’s, of David’s. The expression “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches” is therefore one which comprises many aspects. The New Testament counterpart may be seen in 1 Peter iv. 13; Phil. iii. 10; Col. ii. 24; 2 Tim. iii. 12, &c.

Moses thus believed in the Redeemer-God that was to come, and by faith he became a partaker of the sufferings, even as he expected to be a partaker of the inheritance. He had regard to the recompence of the reward. His faith was the confidence of things hoped for. And through the most painful trials, during forty years of incessant care, toil, sorrow, grief of heart, amidst the greatest difficulties and struggles, he held fast this hope; he bore the burden of the nation patiently and lovingly, in the constant exercise of priestly intercession, relying on the Lord, rejoicing in the Christ, the Rock, that followed them. As he himself expressed it in his Psalm, the everlasting God was his dwelling-place; he knew the sin of man, and the righteous anger of God, but Jehovah's mercy made him rejoice, and the beauty of the Lord was upon him. (Ps. xc.)

On mount Nebo his earthly pilgrimage was ended. Mysterious, unwitnessed by mortal eye, was his exodus from this troubled life. Only angels were present, who had guarded the little ark of bulrushes in which a hundred and twenty years before the beautiful babe lay helpless, except for the omnipotence and faithfulness of the covenant-God, to whom the faith of loving parental hearts had commended him. While the peace of God filled his soul, the archangel Michael guarded his body. Centuries after, we behold him and

Elijah descend from the celestial realms, and on the mount of transfiguration they conversed with the Son of God about the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. How bright is the light, how exceeding great is the glory, how abundant the recompence of the reward! How blessed was the choice of faith, which preferred the affliction of God's people and the reproach of Messiah to all the pleasures of sin and treasures of Egypt!

The forty years which Moses lived as a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian seem a long period of inactivity and obscure leisure. For what purpose, we feel inclined to ask, this waste of years? God watches over the days and hours of His chosen people. He who has numbered the very hairs of our head, will He not watch also over our years? Moses had made the great choice; he had forsaken Egypt's grandeur and felicity; he had embraced the reproach of Christ. He learned now in the solitude of Midian to crucify self; to wait quietly on God; to give up his own will and strength; to be a stranger and pilgrim, even as his fathers were.

God's servants are often sent into the desert. So was John the Baptist, ere he began his short but brilliant witness-life, a bright torch; thus did Saul, after his conversion, go into Arabia. And was not the ministry of Jesus, in whom was no earth-born impure element of false zeal or

strength, preceded by the thirty years' stillness of Nazareth?

After forty years the Lord appeared unto Moses. Scripture does not conceal from us the timidity, the unbelief, the resistance of Moses, when the great command was given to him to deliver Israel out of Egypt. Formerly he was too ready and swift to unsheath the sword, and to rescue the oppressed. Now he is conscious of man's weakness, of his own utter inability for so great a task. But God's word and promise overcame all his difficulties. Moses asked, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh? The Lord answered by reminding him *who He was*, He revealed His name, and promised His presence and all-sufficient help.

By faith Moses went to Egypt and to Pharaoh, and neither the wrath of the king nor the murmuring, the bitter reproaches and the unbelief of his own nation, moved him. He endured, because before the eyes of his heart stood the mighty God, who is invisible. Moses is the first of whom Scripture tells us that performed miracles; believing the Word of God, he showed great and mighty signs.

By faith he ordained the passover and the sprinkling of blood. He believed the mercy of God, who had chosen Israel, and was their Redeemer, passing over their iniquity, transgression, and sin,

delivering them through the blood of the Lamb. Here was the centre and heart of his faith. As the representative and leader of the nation, he had first to receive himself the salvation of God by faith. Notice this passover is his first ordinance to Israel : before the giving of law was the gospel. " Believe, and thou shalt be saved." The first command given by Moses was, " Believe and live." Afterwards the law was given by him, and the law speaks not of faith, but says, " Do this and live." But salvation is of God through faith, redemption is by the blood of the Lamb. Moses himself preaches here salvation without works, by grace, through faith in the Substitute.

By faith he led them through the Red Sea. Israel murmured. They reproached him for bringing them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. On the faith of Moses rested the burden of the whole nation. He said unto the people, " Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to-day." But while he spake these courageous words in the name and for the honour of Jehovah, his heart was crying to the Lord, " Deliver us." And to this silent prayer was the answer, " Why criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." God's miracles pass through some believers' hearts. They are not merely the children of divine omnipotence and mercy, but the travail

and anguish of believing and praying hearts. Elijah *prayed*, and it rained not; he prayed again, and it rained. Thus we are told in the epistle of James; but in the book of Kings we read only the miraculous facts.

This faith of Moses will be remembered for ever; and the song of Moses, the servant of God, for ever associated with the song of the Lamb; for Israel's deliverance out of the Red Sea is a type of the true and final deliverance from all evil, from sin and death, from the world and Satan. And it is by faith only that we can pass through the sea as by dry land. We grasp the promise: "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and they shall not overflow thee." The Lord is our salvation, and in Him is our trust.

Israel is a typical nation. The things which happened unto them are recorded for our instruction and comfort. The things which happened unto them, happen unto us also. Hence all Scripture is to us truth, reality, experience; it is not a record of the past merely, but it is an ever-new description of the experience of all God's children.

We also were in Egypt, and had to learn that we could not bring about our deliverance by our own strength and zeal. Like Moses, we had to flee from such attempts of self-wrought emancipation into the wilderness, and wait quietly upon

the Lord. When we were still, and knew that it was not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, God showed *mercy*. We also have kept by faith the passover and the sprinkling of blood; when, acknowledging our guilt and helplessness, we believed in the Lamb of God, when in faith we repented, eating bitter herbs, and began to gird our loins and to prepare for the walk and fight through the wilderness. We also went through the Red Sea, and then sang the song of praise to God; when we were taught the power of Christ's resurrection, and when the Holy Ghost, separating us by the cross from Egypt, brought us through resurrection unto the new life, and raised our affections to the things above.

This history of the spiritual Israel, described in Scripture and by the saints of God, is so clear and so full of great thoughts, that many know and appreciate it intellectually; it is so beautiful and ideal that many grasp it admiringly with their imagination. But do we know it by *faith*? Have we by faith kept the passover, left Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea? In the intellectual and imaginative belief there is no pain, no contrition of heart, no repentance, no godly sorrow; there is no travailing in birth. But faith is the trust of a guilty, sin-convinced, and helpless soul in a crucified Saviour.

Israel in Egypt. Look at another aspect of this history : "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." The saints who are precious in His sight, whom He purchased with the blood of His own Son, and for whom He has prepared an everlasting inheritance, God's elect must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Who would recognize them in their earthly sufferings as the favourites of God ? Despised of the world, they are a royal priesthood, and the joint-heirs of Christ ; and oppressed with manifold trials and sufferings, they are yet the possessors of all things.

God chasteneth whom He loveth ; and it becomes the future kings to have the experience of the Master, and to take their cross upon them. Yet even while they are thus bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, they are upheld by God. The measure of their trial is fixed by infinite wisdom and tenderness. The angel of the covenant is afflicted in all their afflictions ; God regards them as the apple of His eye. The suffering and tried believer has the most consoling experience of God's goodness and faithfulness ; nay, of God Himself as their portion. Joseph in his prison, David in the mountain solitude, Jonah in the belly of the whale, Daniel in the lions' den, the three men in the fiery furnace, Peter chained to Roman soldiers, Paul and Silas in their fetters at

Philippi, John in the isle of Patmos, were they not all able to praise the Lord, and to rejoice in His love?

Weak and despised believers are the pillars of the world. The intercession of Moses prevails to avert judgment from a whole nation; Samuel prays, and it thunders, and the enemies are defeated; Elijah's faith brings down rain on the parched ground; for the sake of Paul, and through him, the ship's crew were saved, and not one of them perished. God will do all things to secure His people's good. Sun and moon stand still in their course; the dial's hand goes back more than an hour; iron swims on the river; the barrel of meal and cruse of oil fail not; five loaves and two fishes feed a multitude.

It is the will of God to do great things for us. All things are ours; all things work together for good to them that love God—who are the called according to His purpose; all things are freely given unto us with Christ, the Son, whom God spared not, but gave up for our everlasting salvation. But it is the will of God that we should learn *faith*.

By faith a poor and guilty sinner looks to Jesus Christ crucified, and says, By grace I have been saved; by faith, continuing his gaze on Jesus, he adds, The Father Himself loveth me; by faith he beholds in the wounds of Jesus the election of

God, free, spontaneous, never-changing—the choice which in the still eternity counted him one of the jewels, and set him apart for the glory of the ages to come. Resting in this boundless and amazing love of God, as it shines through the Saviour Jesus Christ, the believer lives a life of constant difficulty, trial, conflict, and yet of continual victory and thanksgiving. Faith says, Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Faith asks triumphantly, Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? Triumphantly it is true; but with deep humility, and in the painful conflict with sin, with troubles and temptations of the present life, a wretched man is the believer, and yet a man giving thanks to God.* Saving faith humbles. No mark is more certain and more universal. Suspect all faith that does not clothe the soul with humility. Suspect all faith in which there is not pain, sorrow, conflict.

But if we die daily, let us also rejoice in Christ Jesus.

True faith hath a “yet not I.”† There is a threefold “yet not I.” One that relates to sin, one that relates to spiritual life, and one that relates to duties. “I sin; yet not I.” Delighting in the law of God after the inward man, I still

* Rom. viii. 23; vii. 24, 25.

† From Bridge's *Sermons on Faith*. (Edited by the Countess of Huntingdon.)

do that I would not ; it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

“I live ; yet not I.” Christ liveth in me, and that because I believe in the Saviour, that He loved me, and that by His own gift of Himself He is mine.

I work, yet not I, as the apostle Paul writes : “I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Christ dwells in the heart *by faith*. Hence the wonderful paradox : I, yet not I. He that by grace gives up himself shall find his soul—his life ; his name, his individuality shall endure for ever ; he shall abide and dwell in God for evermore. He has found himself, he has been found of the Great Shepherd. And he, who belongs to the Christ of God, shall inherit all things ; for all things are ours if we be Christ's, who is the Son and the glory of God.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FROM THE JUDGES TO THE MACCABEES: THE BETTER
THING FORESEEN FOR US.

HEBREWS xi. 30-40.

DO we think enough of faith, chosen by divine omnipotent love to be its channel? God alone doeth great marvels, but it is through the faith of His saints.

All the victories of Israel were wrought by faith. Divine power and grace redeemed them on that memorable night; but it was the faith of Moses which kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood. It was God who divided the Red Sea, but in answer to the silent prayer of faith which ascended from the heart of His servant. All miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels were wrought by faith. Jesus prayed to the Father, and then fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, and then said, "Ephphatha. Be thou loosed." Jesus by faith thanked God that He heard Him always, and then uttered His mighty "Lazarus, come forth."

And faith was wrought also in the recipient of divine favour. "Thy faith hath healed thee;" "Be it unto thee as thou hast believed." Such were frequently Christ's words.

The people who perished in the wilderness entered not into God's rest because of unbelief; and because of their unbelief, Jesus could not show many miracles in some places. "Believe only, and thou shalt see the glory of God."

Israel's history is the history of God's omnipotent saving grace, and of man's faith. From heaven descends miracle; from earth ascends faith. From the election of Abraham to the birth of Moses, from the passover and the Red Sea to the dividing of the river Jordan, all is miracle, and all has to go through the faith of some chosen saint. Israel is before Jericho, a walled and fenced city; it is not by power and might, but by faith, that they are to take it. How utterly foolish it must have seemed to the Canaanites, to see that procession day after day: the men of war went round the city, and seven priests before them, bearing the ark of the Lord and blowing trumpets. But Israel *believed*. To give up their own strength, and to put no confidence in their number or valour, and to trust in God, who commanded them—to do what to reason appeared so utterly useless—was indeed faith. The walls of Jericho fell; and, according to God's command,

the city was burnt with fire, and all that was therein ; for the iniquity of the Amorites was full.

Is this not written for our learning ? The walls of unbelief, superstition, and ungodliness, yield to no earthly armour and power. It is not by compulsion, nor by reasoning ; it is not by the weapons which this world supplies, that these walls can be destroyed. It is by the Word of God, and by the Word declared in faith. Ministers and people, they who blow the trumpet, and also the people who are with them, are to be united believing in the power of God. Congregations are only too apt to let the ministers go forth by themselves with the message ; they forget that they are all called to strive with the minister in the gospel, to pray, to labour with him.

The inhabitants of Jericho all perished except one. We ask, what virtue, what excellence, distinguished this chosen one among so many thousands, and commended her to the divine clemency ? God hath chosen things base in this world. Sin red as scarlet He can forgive, and make whiter than snow. Rahab *believed*. She heard the message, that God was with Israel, and that He was about to give them Canaan, because the measure of Canaan's sin was full. All Jericho had heard it. The fame of Israel had gone forth while they were yet in the wilderness. Their victories over Amalek, over Og king of Bashan,

over Sihon, king of the Amorites, had been noised abroad. Jericho had heard that Jehovah was leading forth His people, and coming to judge Canaan. The message was clear, the evidence proving its truth strong and patent ; but only Rahab believed. Man's unbelief has its source, not in the want of evidence or proof, with which the divine message is accompanied, but in the self-righteous, sinful heart, which does not acknowledge the justice of God's anger, and does not thirst after His mercy. But Rahab, though a great sinner, believed both that Canaan was to be judged, and that Israel was God's chosen people. God had granted her conviction of sin and true repentance.

We measure things by an earthly and false standard. We make a great distinction between vice and sin ; between crime and the inward transgression of God's law ; between outward degradation and the pollution of the heart. But how solemn and touching is the fact, so emphatically brought before us in the Gospels, that moral Pharisees rejected, hated, and crucified the blessed Jesus ; and that publicans, and sinners, and harlots received Him in repentance, in faith, in love, and life-long self-sacrifice. Rahab believed with that true and genuine faith which, looking away from the things seen, grasps the promise and trusts all to the unseen God. Her faith manifested itself in

action, in obedience. And she was saved ; though her house was most exposed to danger, yet she was at peace and in safety ; she was separated from judgment and destruction. The line of scarlet thread was to her the sign and seal of the covenant of pardon and salvation. Thus is the chief of sinners safe, if he trusts in the Saviour. Who more exposed than he to the righteous judgment of God ? Who safer in the cleft of the smitten Rock ?

By grace through faith. This is the explanation of the history of Rahab the sinner. She was pardon^ded and rescued, numbered now among Israel, a daughter of Abraham, father of the believing. We see her name enrolled in the imperishable annals of the sacred history. The evangelist Matthew records her name among the ancestors of Jesus. She is one of the mothers of Jesus, and teaches us the wondrous love of our Saviour God.

And in that earnest, severe, and most searching epistle of James, the only two examples given of true, genuine, living faith are Abraham, the friend of God, and Rahab.

“And what shall I say more?” Time would fail to go through the whole history of Israel, the period of the judges and kings, and to show all the golden links of faith in the wonderful chain. Let us learn from this the eternal and spiritual

character of these Scriptures. The history of the judges, Gideon, Barak, Jephthae, and Samson ;* the history of the kings from David downward ; the history of the prophets beginning with Samuel, last of the judges and first of the prophets, is a history of faith, grasping the promises, obeying the divine voice, overcoming the world, suffering and dying in the Lord.†

By faith they wrought great things. They subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. You remember the victories over Philistines and Moabites, Syrians and Edomites, which judges and kings obtained by faith in the living God. You remember the justice and equity with which

• "*Fides nobilitat omnes* : it is faith that raiseth a man. They did great things ; but those things are upon record only as they were wrought by faith ; yet their faith was weak, and laboured under many infirmities. Look into the 11th of the Hebrews ; there is no mention made of Samson's infirmities, nor of Rahab's. Mention is made of their faith, but their infirmities passed by, and not one mentioned ; and all the great things which they did were mentioned only upon the account of faith. God honours His own work, faith."

† Verses 32-38. It is evident that the apostle feels quite overwhelmed with the numerous illustrations of the power of faith in the acts and sufferings of Israel's great men. This accounts for the absence of strict chronological order in these verses. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, and David are enumerated first (without conjunctive particle) as warriors, then (joined by *τεκαί* as introducing something different) the group of prophets. Verse 33 : "Subdued kingdoms" refers to period of judges, "obtained promises" to 2 Sam. vii., "stopped the mouths of lions," Dan. vi. 22. Verse 34 : "Quenched the violence of fire," Dan. iii., "escaped the edge of the sword" (Elijah, Elisha, David, also Macc. ii.), "out of weakness were made strong,"

Joshua, Samuel, and David ruled in Israel. They executed justice and judgment unto all the people. They were able to appeal to the whole nation, that in faithful and disinterested love they had ruled over them. And what was the secret spring of this righteousness? It was what Joshua expressed, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;"* what David said, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?" They believed in God. By faith they obtained promises; for David and the prophets were still and lowly before the Lord, and received His message with meekness and a trembling heart. Thus were they the children of Abraham, who by faith subdued kings, judged righteously, and

like Samson, after his declension (some think of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx.; Isa. xxxviii.), "waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," 1 Macc., where the same expressions are often used. Verse 35: "Women received their dead raised to life again," 1 Kings xvii.; 2 Kings iv. 17. "Tortured," &c., refers to the touching story of Eleazer, and of the seven brothers and their heroic mother. (2 Macc. v. 1; vii.) Verse 37: "Stoned," Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 20; Matt. xxiii. 35), "sawn asunder," according to old tradition, Isaiah the prophet; "slain with the sword," 1 Kings ix. 20. The saints had to endure poverty and every kind of destitution. Notice how all the opposition of the world and rage of Satan cannot pluck Christ's sheep out of His hand, or prevail against the congregation of the Lord. There will always be a testimony for God. How cheerfully ought we to bear our comparatively light burden. And if any brother reading these lines has been counted worthy by the Lord to "suffer great things for Christ's name sake" (Acts ix. 16), may the voice of the Saviour uphold him: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

* Josh. xxiii., xxiv.; 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4; 2 Sam. viii. 15.

received the promises and the confidential disclosures of the divine counsel. They had Abraham's faith, and did the works of Abraham.

Faith accomplishes marvellous deliverances. The mouths of lions can do no injury to believing Daniel, for his God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths. The violence of fire, heated seven-times furiously, is quenched not by water, but by faith; the fourth man—fourth, where there are three believers; third, where there are two Emmaus disciples—was with them because they believed. They escaped the edge of the sword, as David escaped Saul's wrath, and Elijah that of Jezebel.

But faith has not merely great works and great victories, it has also great trials, sufferings, and painful deaths. Now the apostle enumerates not the persons who suffered, but the evils which faith endured. Hoping for a better resurrection, faithful Israelites in the times of the Maccabees endured agonizing tortures; others in faith endured stripes, imprisonments, protracted hardship, destitution, hunger and nakedness, constant suffering and dying. Some, like Zechariah, were stoned; others, as tradition says of Isaiah, were sawn asunder; others, like the prophets in the days of Jezebel, were put to death by the sword. And all lived and suffered by faith, looking forward unto the self-same golden time which we are

awaiting, the coming of the Lord, to establish His kingdom and manifest His glory. God has so united the children of the old dispensation and the disciples of Jesus, that the fathers are not to receive the fulfilment of their hopes until we also receive the full adoption.

Let us learn from these bright examples. We may make use of extraordinary examples to encourage our ordinary faith in ordinary times. These models are on a very grand and large scale, and so we can plainly see them.

Faith works and suffers; faith is busy and energetic. It is our only strength and victory. In suffering we glorify God as well as in action; and in suffering it is only faith which grasps the promises, and rests on the bosom of God in quiet and loving humility. Suffering is an honour God puts on His saints. To them it is *given* to suffer for Christ's sake. A life without affliction and self-denial, a life without the cross, is not likely to precede the life with the crown. When the Church becomes lukewarm, there is little hardship endured, and little cross-bearing. Let tried believers not doubt that they are precious in God's sight. They whom the world despises are generally the God-chosen nobility, of whom the world is not worthy.

See to your faith, listening to God's Word, hearing His call, relying on His promise. "What is

sanctification but faith incarnate?"* And as a true believer is very sensible of his unbelief, dwell much on Christ as the Alpha, the ever-new and sweet beginning. Christ rebukes, but acknowledges, honours, and helps little faith, though He commends strong faith.

Look also at Christ, the Omega. The saints of old looked forward to the better resurrection—that first resurrection of the just spoken of by Daniel, by our Lord, by the apostle Paul, and in the book of Revelation.†

These all, having the grace of God in their hearts, so manifested it in their lives, sufferings, and death, that they obtained a good report. They are now waiting in the realm of peace for the final consummation.

Meanwhile new covenant believers have received some "better thing." What is the better thing foreseen by God for us?

The first and most obvious difference between the old saints and the Church is, that the promised salvation was to them entirely in the future; while we have lived to see the first advent, we also are looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises at the second coming. But to Israel the Messianic advent, with its salvation and glory, was altogether in the future. It is a wonderful privilege that we can say, "Messiah has come! The sacrifice has

* Bridge. † Dan. xii. 2; Luke xx. 35; Phil. iii. 11; Rev. xx. 6.

been offered!" But does this difference imply anything real, or is it merely a difference in clearness of vision and degree of enjoyment? While we must never forget the unity of all God's saints in the one faith and one hope, yet we must not overlook the clearly-taught difference between the position of the Church of Christ and that of believers before the advent.

The promise of the Father, which is contained according to Christ's teaching in all the prophets, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. This great culminating and comprehensive promise, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, presupposes the incarnation, death, and ascension of the Son of God. Thus John the Baptist perceived that the first link of the chain had appeared, and declared that Jesus "shall baptize with the Holy Ghost." This baptism had never taken place yet in Israel. Nor could it take place during Christ's life. John spoke of it as something future. John himself, though in the old dispensation there was none greater than he, is declared by our Saviour to be less than the privileged saints of the new covenant. This gift of the Holy Ghost is connected by our Lord with His death and His going to the Father; and the evangelist John explains to us that it is connected with the glorified humanity of Jesus.* Hence, in a very real and important sense,

* John vii. 38, 39, xiv. 16, xv. 26, xvi. 7, &c.

the Comforter has come, since the ascension of the Lord, in a manner in which He never did and could come before.

The day of Pentecost is the beginning of days. Here is not an isolated and exceptional manifestation, but the commencement of a new period. Believers henceforth are spoken of as sealed with the Spirit, as having received the Spirit of God's Son in their hearts, as having an unction from above. They were exhorted, not to seek "a fresh baptism of the Spirit," but not to grieve the Spirit, whom they *had* received—not to forget that they *were* the temple of the Holy, Ghost; and as they had received the Spirit, so to walk in the Spirit.

The reasons why this gift is now bestowed are manifold and obvious.

1. The Spirit's advent is connected with the finished work of redemption. Because the blood has been shed, the Spirit descends.

2. The Spirit comes through the preaching of faith, and not by the law. It is when the forgiveness of sin is declared that God puts His Spirit within our hearts. Now it is true that Old Testament believers looked forward to the atonement, and were comforted by the assurance of God's grace. But, as we have seen, the way of access into the holiest was not yet made manifest; the conscience was not brought perfectly into liberty. Hence the influence of the Holy Ghost during

that period must have been different from His indwelling now, when we have been actually brought nigh by the blood of Christ. But,

3. The Spirit, as an indwelling Spirit, descends from the incarnate, crucified, and glorified Son of God—the Christ or anointed Head of the Church. Now as before the advent there was not the humanity on the throne, the relation of believers to the coming Lord and Jehovah was indeed mediated by the Spirit; but it must have been different from the mystical union as it now subsists between the Head and the members.

Wonderful is our position; and nothing does so humble and abase the believer as the contrast between the high position given to him of God, and his actual state, life, and conduct. How glorious is the Head! how weak, wayward, and sinful are the members! Are we indeed one with Christ, called to live in the perpetual sunshine of God's love, in the blessed and lively hope of glory; called to represent Jesus in our daily life, to speak and act, to suffer and overcome, as He gave us an ensample, and in the strength of the life, which descends from Him into our souls, have we received the Spirit, who dwells in us constantly, who bears witness with our spirits that we are God's sons, who intercedes in us, so identifying Himself with our sorrow and need as to become a suppliant with us? Are we thus iden-

tified and united with the Lord Jesus, He the Christ, and we the Christians, anointed with the Spirit, as His? Oh, what manner of men ought we to be! And when we compare ourselves with the fathers, who were not chosen to see and hear on earth the things which were reserved for us, how gigantic does the faith of Abraham and the patriarchs appear, how stupendous the sacrifice, the patience, the love, the unworldliness of Moses and the prophets! Do we believe, love, suffer, and endure as the fathers did?

Here is no cause for elation, but for humility; let none of us be puffed up by a merely intellectual head knowledge of the "glorious position of the Church, as distinguished from the Old Testament saints;" but let us glorify God in these men of faith, whose lives are recorded for our learning; let us imitate their example; let us always cherish their memory with veneration and affection.

And as for their future position, let us rest satisfied with what Scripture reveals. God is not ashamed to be called their God. Jesus shall bring them with Him at His coming. At present the spirits of just men are perfect, and in the heavenly Jerusalem. It seems that in the future kingdom they shall stand in a special relation to the earthly Jerusalem and Israel; that they shall be more immediately connected with the earthly inheritance which was promised them of old. The

twelve apostles also, though they belong to the Pentecostal Church, we are told, shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

At the coming of the Lord, the hope of the ancient Israel (including also the saints before Abraham) and the hope of the Pentecostal Church will be fulfilled. The union of all believers will be manifested. This union will be to the glory of God, and part of the blessedness of His people. And in this union we think there will be variety; differences of glory. Different positions and relationships may be maintained during the millennial age, while there is perfect union and communion, Christ Himself being the all-glorious centre.

And as we believe that there will be differences of glory among individuals, why may there not be differences of glory and position for the saints of the various dispensations? These things are partly hidden, that we may dwell all the more on that which is clear, and hasten to the coming of our God and Saviour.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EXEMPLAR OF FAITH.

HEBREWS xii. 1, 2.

TO continue stedfast in faith, patient and enduring to the end, looking unto the appearing of the Lord—this was the exhortation with which the apostle concluded the tenth chapter. This exhortation was not so much interrupted as confirmed and illustrated by the review of the past history of God's children, who exemplify in a most striking manner the nature, trial, and victory of faith. Appealing to their sense of the union of the family of God, and reminding them that God had provided some better thing for them, he repeats the exhortation to steady perseverance in the ways of faith and patience. If all the saints of God lived, suffered, endured, and conquered by faith, shall not we also? If the saints who lived before the incarnation, before the redemption was accomplished, before the High Priest had entered for us into the heavenly sanctuary, trusted in the midst of all discouragements and trials, how

much more ought we who know the name of Jesus, who have received the beginning, the instalment of the great Messianic promise.

We who have still to walk in the narrow path which alone leads to glory are encouraged and instructed by the cloud of witnesses, the innumerable company of saints, who testified amid the most varied circumstances of suffering and temptation, that the just live by faith, and that faith is the victory which overcometh the world. The memory of those children of God, whose lives are recorded for our learning and consolation, animates us, and we feel upheld as it were by their sympathy and by the consciousness, that although few and weak, strangers and pilgrims on earth, we belong to a great and mighty, nay, a victorious army, part of which has already entered into the land of peace.

But the cloud of witnesses* is not the object on which our heart is fixed. They testify of faith, and we cherish their memory with gratitude, and walk with a firmer step, because of the music of their lives. Our eye, however, is fixed, not on

* "So great a cloud" denoting the exceeding great number of saints, a multitude which no man can number. The most remarkable instances of faith had been singled out by the apostle; but soon he felt that time would fail him to enumerate all, while he implied that these eminent saints whom he singled out were only representatives of the thousands of faithful ones who in every age served God. "Witness" may either refer to the saints as beholding us, and our walk of faith or unbelief; or it may mean their testimony to the necessity, the nature and power of faith. In favour

many, but on One; not on the army, but the Leader; not on the servants, but the Lord. We see Jesus only, and from Him we derive our true strength, even as He is our light of life.

There are many witnesses, and yet Jesus only is the true and faithful witness. His witness is also of faith. He is the root, the source, out of which proceeded all the faith of which the eleventh chapter speaks. He is the true Israel, the servant of the Lord, who trusted in God, and by faith glorified the Father who sent Him. As the great Exemplar of faith, Jesus is set before us; as the Captain of salvation, who is the author and finisher of faith; who is not merely the new and living way, by whom we have access to the Father, but who is the way, that we may walk in Him.

Let us first consider the example of Jesus as the great motive of our obedience of faith, and then look at the nature and method of our Christian race.

By faith Jesus lived, suffered, and died; on account of His obedience of faith He entered into

of the first view may be adduced—(a) The nature of the illustration itself. In a race there are spectators who judge, and by their presence encourage. (β) The similar use of the word witness in 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 2. But the second view seems more in accordance with the whole scope of the passage, and is both simpler and more comprehensive. The saints' witness, which is recorded in Scripture, and which we are always to remember, is to the faithfulness of God the transitory character of suffering and persecution, the power and comfort of faith, &c.

glory. Here is not merely our righteousness and peace, but this is also the model and strength of our life. Jesus is the way to the Father. By Him we first come; like Him, and in Him, we who have come must walk; for Jesus is the first-born among many brethren, and to His image we are to be conformed. Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. We who know Him as our Saviour know also the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection; we know Him as the author and finisher of faith. The Lamb who was slain for us is also the Lamb whom we follow; the cross is both the source and method of our new life.

You who trust in Jesus learn to trust also like Jesus. You who believe in the blood of Christ, and who rejoice in His resurrection, learn as the sons of God to live the life and to be possessed of the spirit of your Head and Lord, your elder Brother. For this purpose has the Father quickened you together with Him, that you should walk as the Son of God also walked—by faith.

Jesus walked by faith. "I will put my trust in God." This was the description given of Messiah in the prophets. He, who in the eternal counsel undertook our salvation in obedience to the Father's will, entered by His incarnation on the path of faith. In the eternal counsel of the ever-blessed Triune God, we see not merely the equality of the

Son with the Father, but also the voluntary *subordination* of the Son, undertaking our salvation, and becoming according to the divine purpose the Christ, the Head of the Body, entering thus on the relation of the servant: and this mind was in Him, the Son of God, from all eternity, even obedience unto death. Who can comprehend this mystery of divine love! But herein is the very power and efficacy of the obedience of Jesus, that it is the voluntary condescension and obedience of the *Son of God*; and that it is a true and real obedience, submission, dependence, struggle, suffering—that it is the obedience of *faith*.

By faith He walked, looking always unto the Father, and speaking and acting in filial dependence on the Father, and in filial reception out of the Father's fulness. By faith He looked away from all discouragements, difficulties, and oppositions, committing His cause to the Lord, who had sent Him, to the Father, whose will He had come to fulfil. By faith He resisted and overcame all temptation, whether it came from Satan, or from the false Messianic expectations of Israel, or from His own disciples. By faith He performed the signs and wonders, in which the power and love of God's salvation were symbolized. Before He raised Lazarus from the grave, He, in the energy of faith, thanked God, who heard Him alway. And here we are taught

the nature of all His miracles. He trusted in God; He gave the command, "Have faith in God," out of the fulness of His own experience.* As the apostle Peter says, "Jesus went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of devils; for *God was with Him.*"†

The incarnation of the Son of God, His condescension in emptying Himself, was most real and true! He who was rich did really become poor. He who was God's own Son in glory did really empty Himself, and take upon Him the form of a servant. Born of a woman, and made under the law, the Messiah came to do the will of the Father that sent Him. Real were His prayers, the expression of dependence and trust; real was that lifting up of the eyes to the Father above, before Jesus blessed and healed, before He fed the multitude, before He uttered the word of power; real the supplications in the still night before Jesus appointed His apostles; real the petition, "Glorify Thy Son." Not His

* It is equally true and important that Jesus performed miracles, not as Moses and the other servants of God, but *as the Lord*, the Son of God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The Jews rightly inferred that Jesus made Himself equal with God. Again: "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." Again: Jesus, unlike any mere human prophet, did miracles to manifest forth *His glory*. (John ii. 11.) We must seek the solution of these apparent contradictions in the *Sonship*. Jesus is Son; Jesus is God's Son—filial faith and equality.

† Acts x. 38.

own divine omnipotence, but the Father's protection, was His strength; not His own power, but the Scripture promises echoing the eternal promise, were His hope and consolation.

The Lord Jesus *believed*. By faith He rested in the Word of God which was written concerning Him: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." He pierced by faith the dense, dark cloud of suffering, ignominy, agony, death, and He beheld the joy set before Him. He knew that Israel would reject Him; the cross, with all its shame, the scourging, and spitting, and the mockery, all stood before Him; and yet by faith He added: "And on the third day the Son of man shall rise again from the dead." He who knew that the first part of the 22nd Psalm yet awaited its fulfilment, even His own suffering, believed that the conclusion was also concerning Him. "Thou hast heard me. I will declare Thy name unto my brethren" (faith's family): "in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise to Thee." His faith appropriated the words of the 16th Psalm: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Was it

not by faith that on that night, and after having by a glorious and majestic anticipation instituted the memorial of His expiatory death, He sang a hymn of praise? "The Stone which the builders rejected has become the head corner-stone. This is the Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes." In His sufferings, as the apostle Peter writes, "Jesus committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously;" and His last word was the act of faith: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit."

Jesus believed. He is the author and finisher of faith—the only perfect, all-sided embodiment of faith. Since without faith it is impossible to please God, and since Jesus always and perfectly pleased the Father; since faith is the very root and spirit of obedience, and Jesus was the servant of the Lord, who finished the God-given work, Jesus was perfect in *faith*. In the cloud of witnesses we see faith manifested in scattered fragments, each saint illustrating some aspect, overcoming some difficulty, enduring some test; but Jesus had all faith. The whole realm of faith was traversed by Him; He ascended the whole scale, from the lowest to the highest step; He endured, and He conquered all things. To the end, even unto the death of the cross, He trusted in God.

The joy set before Him was not His motive,

but His encouragement. His motive was God's glory, and His love to the Father and to man. Hence we may also say, that the joy set before Him was His motive. For what else is that joy but that the Father is glorified, that His name is declared, that sinners are saved; that the Church, the body, is gathered; the Church one with Jesus by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, who came after His ascension; that the kingdom is established at His appearing, when the Church, the bride, is associated with Him; that throughout the ages God is all in all? This joy, anticipated by faith, sustained Him here below; upon this joy He entered at His resurrection; this joy is fulfilling itself even now, and is yet awaiting its perfect manifestation and consummation.

Thus by faith He endured the cross, despising the shame. "The cross," the only time in which the word occurs in our epistle as the symbol of *the* obedience, the expiatory sacrifice, the offering up of Himself unto the Father. Who can fathom the depth of His suffering on Golgotha? The more we think of His divinity, and the more we think of Him as the Son of man, of His infinite and eternal love to the Father, of His most sensitive and perfectly holy humanity, the more we wonder with deep sorrow and contrition, yet with adoring gratitude, that He endured the cross, despising the shame. Pain and shame were

most real to Him—to Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, one person.

Jesus is now at the right hand of the throne of God. You know how the apostle, in harmony with all Scripture, delights in presenting the glory and exaltation of the Saviour as the result and reward of His obedience unto death.*

Who is this glorious One, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come? It is Christ, whom He raised from the *dead*, the man Jesus, who suffered, was crucified, dead and buried.† Who is it that ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things? Who but He that also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?‡ Thus Jesus Himself, before His ascension, declared unto His disciples that all power was *given* unto Him in heaven and on earth; that is, given by the Father unto Him as the incarnate Son, who obeyed the salvation-will of God. It is unto His God and our God, unto His Father and our Father, that Jesus ascends; and when in the heavenly glory He appears unto the beloved disciple, He reveals Himself as the First-begotten of the dead: “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”

* So in Phil. iii., and in the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians.

† Col. i.

‡ Eph. iv.

Jesus, the Messiah, is represented to us in Scripture both as Lord and as servant; both as the King, whom we honour even as we honour the Father, and as the first of worshippers, who in the heavenly glory continually maketh intercession for us. In the book of Revelation, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ in this sense also, that it manifests unto us the glorified Christ, the Saviour speaks emphatically of God as His God. Blessed truth, that He who is the First and the Last, the Only-begotten of the Father, has become the Servant, the Anointed, the Head of the Church; that the Father has *given* Him unto us for ever; that on His throne of glory He identifies Himself with the brethren, praying with them as well as for them; that even now He is waiting for His return to us and for His reign with us, even as we are longing for His appearing. In the light of His infinite, eternal divine glory, we behold His marvellous condescension and love. And as the fruit and reward of His obedience we behold His majesty, power, and kingdom.

This truth is full of consolation—full of the most searching and animating consolation. Jesus is our Example; He is our Forerunner; He is the Prototype of all God's saints; the first-born among many brethren. We also are through suffering to enter into glory. Who would venture to rise to such a conception, had not the Lord Himself,

from His throne of exaltation, addressed these words to His churches: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

Learn then that as we are saved *by* faith in Christ crucified, so we are saved *in* the faith of Jesus, knowing the fellowship of His sufferings. Jesus suffered and died to deliver us from wrath and to give us glory. But Jesus suffered and died, that we should arm ourselves likewise with the same mind; that choosing to suffer in the flesh, we should cease from sin; that being chastened of the Lord, we should not be judged; that by dying daily, we should rejoice in the resurrection power through the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus did indeed suffer, in order that we should not suffer the wrath of God, separation from His presence and the eternal death. But Jesus suffered that we *should* suffer all the pain and struggle, all the loneliness and opposition, all the self-denial and crucifixion, which the flesh must experience when the Spirit of Christ rules and guides. Jesus died to send a sword, to send death to self, sin, the love of the world, nay, to our whole life, as it is of the first Adam. Oh, how sad is it to notice these two inseparable aspects of Christ separated! Some speaking of Christ as our model, who know not Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest; others

again speaking much of Christ's blood and perfect peace, and not remembering that Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. Let us hold fast the simplicity of God's method. In the obedience, sufferings, and death of Jesus we have righteousness and peace, and that first and always ; and in them also we have the source, the example, and the strength of our life of faith.

And since the words death and crucifixion, suffering and self-denial, have a gloomy and discouraging sound, let us remember that here is nothing legal, hard, impossible, or even uncertain. All real bitterness was tasted in our stead by Jesus. The light of resurrection shines into our hearts, *even while we mortify the members which are upon earth.* The peace of God and the sympathy of Jesus uphold us, even while we offer up Isaac, our only son. The assurance of the Father's unchanging love, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost bring us joy, even while we groan in this our tabernacle, being burdened, and while we feel the presence and power of sin and temptation. Our blessedness is not in that we mourn, but in that even now Christ is our consolation. We are indeed sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing. We show the death of the Lord ; but it is in a feast, the banquet of love and joy. For He died that we should henceforth truly live, and we hear the words, "Till I come."

(II.) There is a race set before us. Every human life may be viewed as a race, even as every human life may be compared with a fight. There is, however, a good fight of faith, and there is a bad fight against and without faith. So there is the race which the world sets before us, which our own ambition chooses, and which we run in our own unrenewed energy—and there is the race set before us of God, on which we enter when we give our hearts to Jesus, and hear from His lips the words of majesty and love—"Follow Me." The one race appeals to us in our natural state: animated by merely human, if not sinful motives, and pursuing earthly methods, we may reach the goal—a crown of fading leaves; but in the God-appointed race all is of God—heavenly, spiritual, and eternal. The prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus is the crown, immortal and unfading, the inheritance of light and blessedness, the throne of Jesus Himself, who will associate with Himself the disciples, who have overcome and finished their course. The method and laws of the race are the words of Jesus abiding in the heart, the mind of Christ implanted by the Holy Ghost. The strength and energy of the race is the influence, faith-renewing, which the Lord sends unto all that wait upon Him. The race is set before us of God, and God renews our strength to run the race.

It is a race; hence constancy, steadfastness, perseverance are absolutely necessary. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Many, like the Galatians, run well at first, rejoicing in the liberty of the gospel, and with enthusiastic love receiving the messenger of peace; but they are soon hindered and turned aside. Many who at first and immediately rejoice, and perhaps owing to the very absence of sorrow, contrition, and self-distrust, soon fall away, because they have no root.

It is a race, and therefore requires concentration of purpose, singleness of aim, and self-restraint: they who have determined to gain the prize lay aside every burden, and free themselves from every entanglement. They need no exhortation to do so. Of their own accord they lay aside everything that hinders. This points out the necessity (must I say also the difficulty?) of sincerity and singleness of heart. Jesus says, "One thing is needful." May the heart respond, "One thing I ask of the Lord;" and the life, "One thing I do." Every weight, the burden of cares and difficulties, of earthly plans and self-chosen toil, must be laid aside; and that sin of unbelief, which is always within and about us, always obstructing our progress, clouding our view, paralysing our energy, and above all lessening our love. Is not faith victory? Is not unbelief defeat?*

* Whereas weight designates everything that hinders, though

The apostle asks us to lay aside every weight, and the besetting sin, as if we could do it, and could do it easily. "Lay aside," he says, "these useless and hurtful things; leave them behind." It is easy, when we look unto Jesus; but impossible unless our thoughts and affections are centred in Christ—unless we behold Him as our Lord and Bridegroom, our strength and joy. This is the only method of the new covenant. We are not under the law, but under grace. It is not by introspection, by self-discipline, by attempting first to lay aside our weight and our sin, that we gain the victory. These things do not precede the look unto Jesus. It is the light which dispels the darkness; it is the love of Jesus which separates us from the world; it is the grace of Christ that delivers us from all fear and doubt.

Thus the apostle describes his own experience.* His only object is to win Christ, and to be found in Him. His constant desire is to know Christ in His fulness, and the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection, being made

in itself not wrong, the apostle proceeds to mention sin, designating it by a word which occurs nowhere else (*ἐξπρεσβιότατον*), and which seems to mean, coming in our way, standing round us, obstructing us in our progress. To refer the word to unbelief is in harmony with the whole argument and with the whole epistle. (iii. 12.) The words of Owen appear to me to express it most concisely: "It is the nature of indwelling sin, at such seasons, to work by unbelief towards a departure from the living God or the relinquishment of the gospel."

* Phil. iii.

conformable unto His death. Starting with Jesus, he entered the race; looking unto Him, walking with Him, he desired to finish his course. Christ is the end of the way, and the way itself.

“Look away” unto Jesus: averting our eyes from the difficulties before us. The difficulties of our path are great; we know and feel them; we must look at them, but we must then look away from them unto Jesus. Like Abraham, we must not consider the obstacles and even impossibilities; we must not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief. We are not to be insensible in sorrow and trial; we are not to forget our cares; but feeling the weight of our cares, cast them upon the Lord: rejoicing in Him, we may be delivered from all painful anxiety. Stoicism enables men to endure, but the heart is hardened, and still more estranged from God. Looking off unto Jesus, the difficulties and trials of our path only accelerate our progress and deepen our peace.

What is the secret of holiness, peacefulness, and strength, but to have no will, separate from and prior to the will of God? To run the race God sets before us, to walk in the *good works* foreordained by divine wisdom and love. It is one thing to ask, What good thing should *I* like to do for God? Here self is still choosing, and we please and serve after all ourselves. But to ask, like Saul, beholding the divine Master, “Lord, what wilt Thou have

me to do?" is the beginning of true separation to God. If we run the race set before us, engaging in duties God-appointed and not self-chosen, and bestowing all our energies, and that cheerfully, on the God-appointed tasks and sorrows, then may we rest in full assurance that our strength shall never fail, that our fruit shall remain,* that our life shall, though apparently fragmentary, be complete, that we shall reach the end, and be counted faithful in that day.

"Run with patience." Always remembering that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy; that he that believeth shall not make haste, that the race is not to the swift;† but learning the divine paradox, that they who *wait* on the Lord *run*, and are not weary. We have the example of the prophets‡ in patience or endurance, and above all of our blessed Lord. This endurance (in which faith shows its meekness as well as strength) is the great characteristic of the *saints*, the followers of the Lamb. Here also is wisdom. He who gives up self rejoices in God, and he who has died to this present world anticipates the joy of the heavenly kingdom. Experience teaches us that there is an unreal and unfruitful way of speaking of heaven and the future glory, when we forget that Jesus Himself is the heaven we

* John xv. 16.

† Eccies. ix. 11.

‡ James v.

expect; and that we have received even now the earnest pledge and foretaste of our inheritance. Oh, how much of heaven may we not have even now! for are we not even at present the sons of God? and beholding Jesus, are we not even now to be like Him? It is not so much our sufferings, our infirmities, or our trials which separate us from the joy to come, as sin, and above all unbelief. For if a man love Jesus, will not the Father and the Son come and take up their abode in him?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

“WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH.”

HEBREWS xii. 3-13.

LOOKING unto Jesus, we behold both the way and the end of the way. We walk in Him, with Him, to Him. We are to be glorified together with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him. And therefore we are constantly to consider Jesus; not the sufferings of Jesus, but Jesus, who suffered and entered into glory; not the work of Christ, as bringing to us salvation, but Himself, our Saviour, our life, the strength and the model of our walk.

Look at Jesus glorified, and you will behold His wounds; you will see Him, the Lamb as it was slain. Look at Jesus on the cross, and you will behold His glory, and the Father glorified. The sufferings of Christ are remembered in heaven, and in the Church. The image of the suffering Jesus is engraved on the hearts of all believers. To remember Jesus is to remember Jesus crucified.

When we are inclined to become weary and faint in our minds, when our courage fails and our patience wavers, let us consider Jesus, and His experience on earth. To live on earth among sinners, this in itself was trial and sorrow to the Holy One. Not even His own disciples could understand Him; for they savoured the things that are of man. Even they called forth constantly the exercise of patience and forbearance. Jesus was always alone. His soul dwelt apart, with thoughts, desires, sorrows, and hopes, which none could fathom and share. And what contradictions did He suffer from sinners! Jesus was by reason of His purity so clear-sighted and sensitive that from the beginning He knew that He was hated and rejected. He did not commit Himself even to those who admired and followed Him, or who seemed to believe in Him;* for He knew what was in man—contradiction to divine love. Sinners, whom He came to bless and save, opposed Him, the Holy One. He knew and felt their contradiction. It was deep-seated, strong, and bitter; and at last it manifested itself in the cruel hands which nailed Him to the cross. Jesus only loved, blessed, prayed, wept, and died. Let us consider Him as our example! Let us learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart; always willing to submit to God's will and commandment.

* John ii,

It is in the heart that the burnt-offering is brought. We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. This refers not so much to the death of martyrdom. We ought to be willing to lay down our lives both for Jesus and for the brethren. But in the conflict with sin, we ought to dread no pain, no wounds, no crucifixion, even when asked to pluck out the right eye, or to cut off the right hand, to sacrifice the thing most cherished.

“Take the heart from out my heart,
Though it cost me bitter smart.”*

Chastisement,† which is the true character of all painful and trying experiences of the saint, is spoken of throughout Scripture; but we are apt to forget this most important teaching of the word. We remember the verses well enough—they have become proverbs and commonplaces—but we forget to apply them to ourselves; and when the

* Silesius.

† The sufferings of God’s children are sent either to chasten and correct, to bring them to the knowledge of and victory over hidden sin or transgressions, or to prove, test, and thus strengthen and raise to a higher level of experience and usefulness, or they are a privilege and honour as a testimony for Christ, for His name’s sake, and to show forth His praise. But they may all be summed up under *παιδεία*, parental discipline, and are contrasted with the judgments of divine displeasure and anger. The apostle uses here (*v.* 5) a personification of the divine voice of exhortation speaking to us in love. (Prov. iii. 11.) In Proverbs the eternal wisdom addresses warning, counsel, and encouragement to “her children.” (Matt. xi. 19.)

afflictions and difficulties come, we often fail to recognize in them the fulfilment of the Scripture word. In the world you shall have tribulation. Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. They that sow with tears shall reap with joy.

Scripture is a book for life; and as life is full of affliction, so the Word of God abounds with counsel and comfort for the afflicted. For to view and to bear affliction aright is not easy; it is impossible without God's Word and Spirit. We are inclined either to despise the chastening of the Lord, or to faint under it. Either we try to bear trials in pride, in our own strength, without recognizing that they are sent by God to humble us, to lead us to self-examination and repentance, to deepen our sense of dependence on God, to fix our thoughts and desires more on heavenly things. The world generally endeavours, in time of sorrow, bereavement, or trial, to get over it; that is, to feel it as little as possible. God does not mean us to get over it, but to feel chastisement, and in and through it to be drawn nearer to Himself.

The spirit of Stoicism is far removed from the spirit of God's children. They are sensitive; they feel the displeasure of God; they stand upon the watch-tower and ask, "Shew me wherefore Thou

contendest with me?" The Christian does not harden his heart against sorrow and bereavement; he does not look upon suffering as an iron necessity, to be borne with an iron and impassive calmness; it is sent of God.

There is the other danger of sinking into despondency; we think we cannot endure it; darkness seems to swallow us up; hard thoughts rise within us; our hearts fail us; and the voice of thanksgiving and hope seems hushed for ever.

Now knowing from the Word of God and our own experience that such is the tendency of our hearts, either in undue elation to despise God's chastening, or in undue depression to faint, let us pray for ourselves, and for all the afflicted, that we may not lose the benefit of the precious, though sad, gift of chastisement, that we may humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt us in due time.

Chastisement is sent by fatherly love. In heaven no chastisement is needed; in hell no chastisement is possible; earth is the scene, and the children of God the subjects of chastisement.

God is our Father, and therefore He chastens us. Jesus is our loving and faithful Saviour, and therefore He rebukes us. And the Holy Ghost, although it is His to comfort and sustain the believer, reveals unto us first, with piercing conviction, the sins and failings which are to be judged

and given up. Chastisement has reference not merely to sins, but God's object is to conform us to the image of Christ. God had one Son, without sin, but not without sorrow.

But we are sinful, and our hearts cleave to the world and our souls to the dust. To love God truly, and to find our joy and delight in Him and in heavenly things, to give up trust and complacency in self, and to ascribe glory to God only, how far are we from this! and sometimes when we or others least think so. Was not Job upright and devoted to the fear of God? Why is David a man of sorrows, and Jeremiah a man of tears? Paul, caught up to the third heaven, and beholding the glory of the Lord, has to bear the thorn in the flesh. John the beloved is in Patmos. God knows why. He has chosen the saints and appointed the sufferings of the saints, that they may win Christ; that they may be made like unto Him; that they may hereafter be glorified together with Him. We see the gentlest, the most heavenly-minded Christians tried; they themselves are the first to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and to acknowledge that God is trying and refining them, to condemn sin in the flesh, to vivify the Spirit.

And this chastisement is severe. He *scourgeth* every son. Even an apostle beseeches the Lord three times to remove it. There, where we are most

sensitive, God touches us. The thorn in the flesh is something which we fancy we cannot bear if it were to remain life-long. We have emerged as it were out of a dark tunnel, and fancy that the rest of our journey will be amid sunlit fields. We have achieved steep and rugged ascents, and imagine the period of great and exhausting exertions is over. But Abraham was above a hundred years old when his faith was severely tested. The trial, deepest and sorest, seems to leave us for awhile, yet it returns again. For God's love remains, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If the apostle Paul stood in danger of spiritual pride and self-trust, and needed this perpetual scourging to cling to Jesus' grace, which is all-sufficient, oh let us remember that in each one of us there is the same flesh which needs painful crucifixion. And what shall I say of daily trials, losses, wounded affection, sickness, loneliness?

One of the platitudes of the present day is, that religion is not a gloomy, but a cheerful thing. Although it is easy to see what was meant by him who first opposed this assertion, either to morbid and self-assumed gloom, or to the ignorant representation of the world; yet, as it is generally understood, nothing can be less true. Blessed are they that mourn. Woe unto you that laugh. Narrow is the way. If any man will serve Me, let him take up his cross, and follow Me. He

that seeketh his life shall lose it. Although the Christian anoints his head and washes his face, he is always fasting; the will has been broken by God, by wounding or bereaving us in our most tender point; the flesh is being constantly crucified. We are not born to be happy either in this world or in our present condition, but the reverse—to be unhappy; nay, to try constantly to be dead to self and the world, that the spirit may possess God, and rejoice in Him.*

God is our Father; this present life is only a school, a period of childhood and minority; discipline and chastisement are the tokens of God's unchanging love and constant watchfulness. Childhood is both solemn and peaceful. We look back on it with reverence and affection. For in childhood everything has the character of education; it is spiritual, and for the sake of the real inner man and his future. Parents and teachers are constantly directing, and rebuking; the whole life is under rule, restraint, and guidance; but the only

* As there is a false and morbid asceticism, so there is also a false and pernicious tendency to cover a worldly and shallow method of life under the phrase of "religion being joyous, and no enemy to cheerfulness." To take a very simple and obvious instance. What is meant by a "cheerful, pleasant Sunday"? No doubt men may have erred on the side of strictness and legalism; but is a "cheerful" Sunday one in which there is much communion with God in prayer and meditation on God's Word, much anticipation of the joys of heaven in praise and fellowship with the brethren? Alas! too many understand by a cheerful Sunday a day in which the spiritual element is reduced to a minimum.

and constant object is the *child himself*, his good, his character, his future; the only motive is love. There is more reality in a child's life than in our subsequent life; the whole day, with its lessons and recreations, is devoted to the true and real interests of the child. Hence, when we look back on it, we say, How happy we were! Not that we forget the constant troubles, sorrows, cares, and fears which children have; but we feel that then every one connected with us loved us, and sought our welfare; that *we* were the object, not means to an end, but the end itself.*

Now, as childhood is to the rest of our earthly life, so is the whole of our earthly life to the future heavenly one. Let us cultivate then the spirit of childhood. Let us think it natural that we are daily rebuked and chastened, that our thoughts, words, and actions need constant correction and alteration; let us receive this with the docility and meekness of children, and with the trustful and

* The contrast between the discipline of earthly fathers and of God. (1) The one is father of our flesh; God is the Father of spirits, the Creator and source of life, spiritual and everlasting, as well as physical and temporal. (2) The one for a brief period; God during our whole lifetime. (3) The one with imperfect knowledge, in much infirmity "after their own pleasure;" God with unerring wisdom, and in pure love. (4) The aim of the one, our earthly future; the aim of God, to make us partakers of His holiness. Yet imperfect as is the earthly father's discipline, we gave it reverence, "as was right" and according to God's will, and for our safety. How much more ought we to be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, of whom is our true life.

sweet assurance that love breathes in all our chastening, that we are in the most tender and fatherly hands. God's only object is our blessedness, and this is our blessedness, to be like Jesus, the only-begotten of the Father, the first-born among many brethren.

No chastisement while it lasts is joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Even on earth we reap the fruit, and enter into the harvest. "Afterwards." Does not this word search and try us? Have we not all had chastisement? Have we not all passed through sorrow? Can we look back on the past without recalling seasons of deep and heartfelt affliction? Has no sword pierced our soul, has no painful sacrifice been exacted of us? Do these things belong to the past? Have they gone and disappeared without leaving behind them peaceable fruits unto righteousness? After such experiences, tears, conflicts; after such solemn, silent, chastened seasons in the wilderness; after such views of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, of the fourth Man in the fiery furnace, are we still worldly, proud, impatient, volatile? do we still seek our rest and joy in the broken cisterns instead of the living Fountain? God forbid that we should forget the chastening of the Lord, that we should "get over" sorrow, or be comforted

like the world. *Now* is our 'afterwards,' peace and godliness to-day—by reason of yesterday's sorrow and trial.

Especially in the new covenant dispensation God's people are called to suffer. The saying of the great philosopher is well known : " Prosperity was the characteristic of the Old Testament ; adversity is the characteristic of the New."* The full meaning of this remark does not lie on the surface. The Israelites had the promise of earthly prosperity. God promised to reward His people with temporal blessings, if they obeyed His commandment. He Himself was to be their portion, and their exceeding great reward ; and such was the spirituality of the law, that the saints under the old covenant dispensation knew that in God, and in Him alone, was their life and joy. In connecting thus obedience and earthly prosperity, God not merely wished to help and attract the people in their spiritual weakness and infancy, but also to teach them that every good gift cometh from above ; that Jehovah is Lord of all, and that even on this sin-defiled and Satan-enslaved earth the divine laws of holy love contain the true and permanent sources of physical and social happiness. And this will be seen when Israel, converted by the Holy Ghost and restored to their own land, shall walk in God's precepts. Then, as

* Bacon,

the psalms and prophets describe, on the basis of the original promises in the law, all earthly lands will be prosperous. No war, no oppression, no abject poverty, no famine shall then bring misery and suffering to mankind; but the original purpose of the loving and generous Creator shall then be realized, and hitherto unknown resources of health, wealth, and social well-being be developed.

Israel was chosen for this purpose also—to reveal on earth the blessedness of a God-fearing commonwealth. But only in the future Messianic kingdom will this be realized. When Israel had these promises of earthly blessing, the sufferings and afflictions of the godly must have been a most perplexing problem. We can understand the difficulties propounded in the book of Job, and in such psalms as the 37th and 73rd: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers. Let not thy footsteps slip, doubting God’s truth and faithfulness, when thou seest the righteous in trouble and anguish, and the wicked without care and sorrow.” This exercise of faith was very great. How intense and ardent was then their soul-cleaving unto Jehovah! “Whom have I in the heavens but Thee?” “Though He slay me, yet will I stay with Him.” How firm was their hope, that ultimately Jehovah would come and establish the kingdom, when the poor will have bread and be

satisfied, when justice and equity would reign. The Old Testament is indeed the religion of prosperity ; but only in idea and in the hope of Messiah's reign. In actual reality, it was the religion of suffering, of tears, of self-denial, of faith in the Unseen. Hence the Psalms of David and the prayers of the prophets.*

Gradually the divine method of glory through suffering was made known to God's people. From righteous Abel onward, the servants of God suffered for righteousness. From the days of Abraham, the true yet imperfect believers suffered while they were tested, and led into a higher region of light. From the days of Joseph, the faithful ones had to be bound in fetters, and the word of the Lord tried them, by a divine chemistry separating in them the carnal from the spiritual. Moses preferred Jehovah's reproach to Egypt's honour and treasure. Chosen of God, and nearest to Him, Moses was the most plagued of all men ; the burden of a sinful and disobedient, yet tenderly-beloved, nation rested on him. But in David a new manifestation of suffering was given to Israel. See the shepherd-youth, in the simplicity and beauty of childlike faith, performing heroic acts, unseen by man, on the silent field ; no feverish ambition or youthful self-confidence, but trust in

* Wo kämen David's Psalmen her,
Wenn nicht die liebe Trübsal wär.

the God of his fathers steeling his arm against the lion and bear ; see this true Israelite without guile, strong in faith and with a tender and loving heart overflowing with song and melody, chosen of God, anointed by Samuel the prophet, champion and deliverer of Israel's armies, beloved of the nation ; yet meek and lowly, without pride and elation of impatience. How noble his bearing to Saul ! how quiet and humble towards the people ! True king, by the grace of God ; lover of God, and companion of all them that fear Him ; yet who ever suffered like him persecution, reproach, famine, or nakedness ? He was hunted like a partridge on the mountains, surrounded by foes, despised, forsaken ; tears were his meat day after day, while the enemy continually said, " Where is thy God ? " The reign of David was full of trouble and most heart-searching sorrow. What prayers of anguish and desolate mourning ascended from his soul ! Yet was he God's chosen and anointed ; the Beloved was his name ; in and through him God's blessing rested upon Israel. Since that time the prediction of Messiah as the suffering servant of Jehovah assumes increasing distinctness, the picture of the One, the only One, of whom David, of whom the true righteous Israel, were only imperfect types.

To us, the New Testament Church, a clearer light has come, a brighter blessing is given,

What is it? One word expresses it—*the cross*. Jesus is our Lord; if the world hated Him, it will hate us also. If Jesus came into the world to suffer and to die, can we call ourselves followers of Jesus, or brothers resembling Him, unless we suffer with Him, and are made conformable unto His death? We have to suffer for righteousness' sake; we have to suffer because of our sin and of the corruption of our flesh. But in both these kinds of suffering it is our blessed privilege to have fellowship with Christ crucified. When we suffer as Christians, we say, This is because I belong to Jesus; I fill up what is behind of His sufferings. If God sends affliction and sorrow, we say, God made the Captain of salvation perfect through sufferings; He treats me now as one of the children. If we find it painful to overcome impatience, self-love, and the various manifestations of sin, we say, I have been crucified together with Christ, then God condemned sin in the flesh; and by virtue of my union with Jesus I must now mortify the members that are on earth. Christ's cross separates us from sin and the world. Here is our station. Here is the *nexus* of justification and sanctification. Here we learn to become a burnt-offering. Here we spend truly sweet moments, yet full of sorrow and pain, while we behold not merely our sins forgiven, but crucified; while we behold ourselves not merely acquitted, but cast

into the fiery mould, to be made like Jesus. Every child of Adam has trouble, sickness, suffering; only Christ's people have the cross.

The cross of Christ is despised and hated, not merely by self-righteous Jews and wise and worldly Greeks; but within the professing Church the apostle weeps over many who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Not of the doctrine, that Christ died instead of sinners, but of the teaching, that we have been crucified with Him, and have been planted in the likeness of His death; that we have been saved, and are being saved, not from death, but out of death; that dying daily the painful death by crucifixion, we live the spiritual, resurrection-life together with and in Christ. We are to be partakers of God's holiness.* When God commands us to be holy, He knows that there is only one holiness, even His own. Man trying to be holy—that is, separate from sin and the world—can only fail; he is only going to a greater distance from God, from the only position in which God can have communion with us as poor and helpless sinners. But God gives us His holiness. In Christ Jesus, who is both the Temple and the High Priest, we are brought nigh, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy people. As Jesus covers, shelters, and beautifies us with His righteousness and peace, so He separates also by

* Compare next Lecture.

His holiness from sin and worldliness. Chastisement is one of the instruments by which the Father prunes the fruit-bearing branches. By affliction and the inward crucifixion we learn to seek our true life, treasure, strength, and joy, not in earthly affections, possessions, pursuits, and attainments, however good and noble, but in Him who is at the right hand of God ; and the end will be glory. Christ's people, who have passed through much tribulation, shall stand before the throne and the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands.

Let us therefore not faint, but lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ; let us run with patience the race set before us,* making straight paths for our feet, that thus even the weak and lame may not stumble, but gain strength and skill in the divine and peaceful path.

* Verse 13 returns to verse 1.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PEACE AND HOLINESS.

HEBREWS xii. 14-18.

THE two exhortations,* to follow peace with all men, and that holiness without which none can see the Lord, comprise the whole Christian life. They refer to our relation to God and to our neighbour. They embrace both tables of the law. Love to God is the first and supreme commandment. But, as Jesus so beautifully expressed it, the second is *like* unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The intimate connection between these two exhortations is always pointed out in Scripture. In loving our brother we abide in God. If there is a cloud between me and my brother, there is

The preceding exhortation, "Lift up the hands," &c.; "Making straight paths for your feet," &c., alludes to Isa. xxxv. 3, and Prov. iv. 26. As Delitzsch remarks, the total apostasy of weak and hesitating members was to be prevented by the whole congregation rousing itself to decision and faithfulness. This would exert a salutary and helpful influence, as a smooth and even path encourages weak and lame feet to the effort of walking.

also a cloud between me and the Lord. Our growth in grace is according to God's will and Christ's institution within the Church, and in and by the communion of saints. Hence we are exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; for there is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope.

Christ has indeed promised to each individual, "If a man love Me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And we can scarcely lay too much stress on the necessity of secret prayer, of solitary meditation, of each one working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. But neither can we lay too much stress on the institution of the congregation, on the communion of saints, on the special blessing, on the special presence promised to the meeting of believers in Jesus' name, on the necessity of continuing stedfast in doctrine—that is, in the apostolic teaching as continued by God-given teachers and pastors—in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in united prayer. The individual spiritual life is to be nourished in the Church, and is again to nourish and enrich the congregation; and as no general and comprehensive philanthropy can be genuine without love to parents and children, neighbours and friends, or can be a substitute for the affection, claimed first by divine

and natural law, so as a rule no Christian is in his right place, or in a healthy condition, who does not live and work in a congregation, and give his energies, beginning with his prayer and intercession, to a community of believers, united together for worship and work in one special place. When the Hebrews became cold in love and wavering in the faith, they began neglecting to assemble themselves together, and cultivate Christian fellowship. Edification in Scripture always refers to the building up of believers as a community. Fellowship and co-operation are inseparably connected with the development of many aspects of Christian life.

Now the characteristic feature of the Church ought to be the spirit of peace. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." And this concord proceeds from that peace with God, which the individual Christian possesses, even as the absence of concord must be traced to the absence of peace in the heart with the Lord.

The peace the world cannot give, which passeth all understanding, comes from the God of peace, the Father who loved us. It comes through Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross; it enters the heart by the Holy Ghost, who assures us of our acceptance. But this is only the first experience

of peace. Our peace is the very peace of Jesus. "My peace I give unto you." How then can they who have Christ's peace, as well as the peace purchased by Christ, be without love to the brethren, without patience and meekness? How can clamour and bitterness and malice, uncharitableness and envy, enter into the heart which rejoices in God, and which is one with that Saviour who washed the disciples' feet; who prayed for Peter, while he denied his Master; who shed His blood, interceding for His enemies, and loving His own to the end?

"Follow peace with all men." "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the sons of God." Why has this beatitude the highest reward attached to it? Because the only begotten Son of God is the Peace-maker. He came to make peace, true peace in righteousness and holiness. He made peace by His life and death; He sends the message of peace to all, far and near; He brings peace to the greatest enemies, and despisers of His gospel. By the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, He gives believers to be partakers of His own peace.

Christians are therefore at peace, and the makers of peace. They are faithful to God, and to His truth; their testimony is against sin and unbelief in the world, against hypocrisy and unfaithfulness in the Church; but as love is their life-element,

so peace is their characteristic. "Into whatever house ye go, salute it;" and this is the salutation, "Peace be with you." "And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you." As if Christ said, You possess peace as your own, inalienable and most precious, deep-seated in the very heart of hearts. You go forth to wish, to declare, to bring peace. They who receive you shall through your peace be brought to peace, as flame kindles flame. They who reject you shall not disturb your peace, or even diminish it, or embitter you, or discourage you for your further work.

We are to *follow* peace—cultivate it earnestly. We must have peace within first, if we are to be the sons of peace, the peacemakers. Let us therefore look constantly to Jesus.

There are dark thoughts in the heart; a discontent with things around us, and a dissatisfaction with our spiritual state and attainments; a discontent which is barren of useful or helpful thoughts and actions. There are fears and misgivings which paralyse and fetter; a downward bent, the soul cleaving to the dust; the mind running to and fro in fruitless retrospect, calculating and planning future amendment. But it need not be so. The child of God ought to walk in the light of His countenance. Saved by grace, his life is a

life of faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

Again, there are Christians who, although they know the grace of the Lord, seem always to be in search of something to give them a fuller peace. They run eagerly after every new doctrine and movement, as if it might bring them the unknown treasure. Oh, dear soul, remember thy baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! Look unto Jesus, who died for thee, and who now liveth to pray for thee, and by His Spirit to conform thee to His image. If Jesus dwells in the heart by faith, it is peace. We rest in the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, and from which nothing shall be able to separate us. Christ's peace, beginning in the conscience, pervades the heart with its affections, and the mind with its thought and purpose. It passes all understanding; it manifests itself in humility and quietness. There is sometimes among Christians a restlessness and feverish energy, running to and fro in order to draw water, which shows that there is a want of the true peace within. Christ has given to us to have within us a well of water springing up into eternal life.

If God's peace is within us, we love the brethren and all men. We are able to deal with them tenderly and calmly. Humility, affection, and hopefulness characterise the son of peace; for he is

always praising the boundless grace of God in which he stands.

Thus, in our relation with our fellow-men we are in communion with God; therefore the apostle adds: "Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord." How beautiful and solemn are these words. They seem to descend from the very throne of God, out of the brightness of that light which no man can approach unto. And yet every heart must assent, and every conscience set to its seal. "Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord." Who can hear the words without bowing in reverence, and saying, Amen? And such is the divine simplicity and power of these words, that once heard they can never be forgotten. They live for ever in the memory. But do these words fill me with fear or with love? do they repel and chill? or do they attract and animate? Do they disturb or deepen my peace, and the sweet assurance, I am the Lord's, and He is mine?

Some of us may remember the time when this word and similar declarations of Scripture brought to us fear and the spirit of bondage. Some here may still be in this state. Is it not strange that we should think this a hard saying, and that we should avoid looking it earnestly in the face? and yet we pass so lightly over a word like this, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And what is this declaration,

“Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord,” but another form of the same most solemn truth: The flesh cannot please God, and sinners cannot stand in His presence. Only the renewed, who by faith in Jesus have received power to become the sons of God; only the spiritual, born of the Spirit, have fellowship with the Father and the Son. But when you hear, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” you think of a doctrine and of a past experience. While when you hear, “Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord,” you think of *God and yourself, living now*, and this indeed is full of awe and solemnity.

God is holy, separate from all darkness and sin; but not in isolated majesty banishing the imperfect and sinful from His presence: for God is light; God is love. It is the nature of light to communicate itself. Remaining pure and bright, undiminished and unsullied, it overcomes darkness, and kindles light. The holiness of God is likewise mentioned in Scripture, mostly in connection with love, communicating itself, and drawing into itself. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of *hosts*.” The angelic creation is also holy; for it is God’s. “Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory;” for in Christ both heaven and earth are to be filled with the divine light and love. “The Holy One of Israel, and your Redeemer.” “I am holy”—but God

does not remain alone, separate — “be ye also holy.” “He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name.”*

I behold then in the holiness of the Lord His most pure, righteous, solemn, and yet most tender and compassionate, love condescending to me; not willing to leave me in my sin, opaque darkness, flesh, Adam, but to bring me unto Himself; nay, to make me a partaker of His holiness. I see the holiness of God manifested in Jesus. I see Jesus, the Holy One, God and Man, Creator and Creature, Lord and Servant, Adored and Adoring; I see the Babe, that Holy Thing which was born of the Virgin Mary, holy, and yet flesh; I see Him on earth, the Tabernacle of God; I see Him on the cross, the Holy Temple broken, nay, the Holy Temple accounted sinful, and deserted by God; I see Him risen, the Holy Temple built again; I see Him ascended, the great High Priest. “Holiness unto the Lord” is written on His forehead; and I know that in Him I also am holy to Jehovah. By the blood of Jesus we are brought nigh to God. In the great High Priest we are priests, holy, set apart to worship and serve God. We who were formerly darkness, are now light; we who were enemies, are now in the love of God.

* Compare also Psalm xcix; Hosea xi. 9. The Spirit, who in condescending love comes most directly into contact with us, is emphatically called “holy.”

In Jesus we are sanctified. As Luther frequently said, "My holiness is in heaven."

Hence the exhortation of the apostle, when he says, Follow holiness, is the same which he urges in all his epistles: "Remember, that by the death of Christ you have been delivered, and separated from sin and this evil world; reckon yourselves to have died with Christ, to have been buried, and to have been raised to seek the things which are above." "As you have received Christ, so abide and walk in Him." "Follow" (as the one constant and earnest object of life) "that holiness, without which none shall see the Lord."

There are two errors against which we must guard. Justification and sanctification proceed from one source. When we first believed in Jesus, we received not merely pardon, but the renewal of heart and will. Then we were separated from sin unto God. Then faith saw the old man condemned and crucified. Then we began the new life of faith, in which there is conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. Now, we must always remember and hold fast *this beginning*. There is no *second* starting-point for sanctification; there is only one starting-point and beginning of the new life. It is not by some subsequent resolution, in which we concentrate our energy, and by an act of our will that we determine henceforth to live a godly life, but by faith constantly grasping what it

grasped at conversion, the grace of God in Christ, that we are disciplined and conformed to the will of God. The apostle never exhorts Christians to make a new beginning, to resolve, to consecrate themselves, to seek a fresh baptism ; but to reckon themselves to have died, to have been transplanted, to remember that they had received the Spirit, and that they were set apart unto God. God is holy ; Christ is my holiness ; I am holy in Him, who died for me, and for me is now in heaven. Humbled and comforted by this assurance, let me abide in Christ ; let me put away, in His strength, all sin and worldliness, from which His death separates me ; let me live by faith in Jesus.

Again, it is not a matter of degree. The flesh is condemned ; sin is judged ; the world is crucified. My aim is not to be a little less sinful, carnal, and worldly to-day than I was yesterday. My aim is to mortify the old man, with all its affections and lusts ; not to love the world, and any of the things that are in the world ; to follow that holiness according to which I have been brought into the position of a child of God, a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Ghost. It is not said to me, *Become* perfect, but *be* perfect ; I am to be a partaker of God's holiness.

This is the peculiarity of the divine method. All human religions are ignorant of this mystery.

Ask a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Rationalist, any one but a Christian, "What do you mean by your righteousness, or your holiness?" His reply is, "I mean my integrity, my kindliness, my purity, my benevolence, my good thoughts, feelings, and works." It is always "my." Ask a Christian, "What is your righteousness?" His answer is, "Jehovah—Christ is my righteousness." "What is your holiness?" "My holiness is in heaven—Christ." "What is your life?" "My life is hid with Christ in God, and Christ liveth in me."

Christ then is made unto us sanctification. If only holiness can admit us to the blessed vision of God, it must be Christ; for imperfect holiness is as great a contradiction as unclean purity.

But what is meant by *following* (striving after) holiness?

If you are one with Christ, you must know that there are within you *two*, which war against each other with a most determined hostility. The aim of the flesh is nothing less than to kill the Spirit. Its object is total extermination. It is not that you should pray less, but that you should not pray at all. It is not that you should love Christ with less fervour, but that you should forget Him. The aim of the Spirit is to kill the flesh, even sin.

This warfare is painful; for sin is still *in* us. It is not like a garment that we wear. It has en-

trenched itself in our flesh ; that is, the old Adam-nature of body, soul, and spirit. Hence cleaving to Christ and our holiness in Him is crucifixion of the flesh, and that is painful. To overcome the temptations of the world, with its allurements, fascinating errors, or alarming frowns, involves conflict and sacrifice ; implies painful watching and constant self-denial. To follow a human standard of holiness, to perform the self-imposed task, to deny oneself the self-chosen number and kind of enjoyments, may involve a certain amount of hardship and pain ; and the world has an admiring eye for this kind of saintliness. But what is it to the fight of faith ? What to the task of presenting our bodies—our whole self, and that always—a living sacrifice unto God ? What to the conflict, in which there is no intermission, to the aim of glorifying God which enters into the minutest detail of our life, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do ? What to the desire to walk in love, even as Christ loved us, to be imitators of God as dear children, to have the same mind in us which was in Christ ? Let us study the epistles of the apostle Paul, and learn the solemn and awful character of the Christian life, warfare, and race ; the constant need of watchfulness and concentration of energy ; of diligence, self-restraint, and self-denial. But let us learn from them that it is a blessed and joyous thing

to follow "the Holiness;" to abide in the light and love of God; to dwell in Him who is Light, and in whom is no darkness at all; who is Love, and who hath shed abroad His love in our hearts.

While we thus know the fountain of holiness, let us use with diligence and reverent humility the channels of divine blessing. God has given His word, that the man of God may be furnished throughly unto every good work. We are sanctified through the truth. The commandments of God, and the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ, are to be our constant study, our inward delight, and **our** daily path. If we keep Christ's commandments, we abide in His love. The child of God regards all the commandments of God as channels of blessing, and of communion with the Father and the Son; as safeguards against the inroads of the enemy; as expressions of the divine love seeking our love. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the language of infinite love, which has chosen us to be His portion for evermore.

He who seeks the holiness, without which none shall see the Lord, must remember that our whole man—body, soul, and spirit—is to be presented unblamable, that in all things we are to glorify God. Let us therefore have regard to all the commandments and warnings of the Word. Two dangers are here pointed out by the apostle, worldly

lusts and profanity, or ungodliness.* Believers still need such exhortations. The apostle writes to Timothy, faithful and spiritual as he was, "Flee youthful lusts." The epistles contain many direct and pointed warnings against different sins. No humble Christian will pass over these injunctions as unnecessary.

* In verse 15, the apostle exhorts the congregation to remember their corporate responsibility for each member. They are to look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. An outward professor may be brought, through the loving care and zeal of the brethren, to true faith. But if this object is not attained, church-discipline is an important ordinance and duty, "designed by Christ Himself to prevent these contagious evils in churches." (Owen.) The reference is to Deut. xxix. 18. Out of such, as a root, spring bitter results—a burden of guilt which oppresses and defiles the whole congregation. Even when the bad example does not infect the rest, the guilt resting upon the Church, neglecting discipline, acts as defilement.

The character and history of Esau is a beacon. We know from Genesis xxiv. 37, xxvii. 46, and xxviii. 1-6, that Esau had no appreciation of the divine blessing and promise. He was "profane;" that is, earthly-minded or ungodly. We are here told that Esau was also sunk in carnal ways. (This statement rests probably on tradition.) Yet the time came when he regretted that for a paltry gratification he forfeited his right. Afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For though he sought carefully with tears to change his father's mind (*αὐτὸν*, that is, *μετάνοιαν*), he found (in Isaac) no place for change of mind. This seems to be the meaning of this difficult passage. Esau is never represented as an apostate, as one who professed and appeared to be a believer, and then fell away. So (apart from other reasons) the meaning of the apostle cannot be that Esau, as an apostate, was not able to find repentance. But we know that, notwithstanding his vehement and urgent entreaties, Isaac could not change his mind, or repent him of what he had done in conferring the blessing on Jacob, which God approved of. This explanation is adopted by Owen, and fully defended by Kurtz.

The child of God, separated by the blood of Jesus, and sanctified by the indwelling Spirit, has received from God the love of holiness. He has been made by grace partaker of the divine holiness, and his daily desire and aim is to realize his position, to live according to it, and to resist and overcome sin, the flesh, and the world. Amid many falls and failures, in fear and trembling, with tears and sighs, his soul followeth hard after God. But the Lord says, "Only be strong, and of a good courage." If our sincere desire is, Show me Thy glory! the Lord will declare unto us His name. If we wish to see God, our hearts, purified by faith, shall behold Him, and in the glory we shall see Him face to face. Living in the presence of God, he who loves and seeks holiness offers this prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Walking in the light (following peace and holiness), we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

And as there is nothing here to discourage the weakest believer, so let the very knowledge that God's holy people in glory behold the Lord, preach glad tidings unto the sinner. What were the Corinthians whom the apostle Paul brings and espouses as a chaste virgin unto the heavenly

Bridegroom? They were once sinners, transgressors, living far from God and His ways; but they are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Saints are sinners saved by grace. Having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they walk by faith as strangers here, and shall behold the face of God in glory everlasting. Thus the future glory preaches present grace to all sinners.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MOUNT SINAI AND MOUNT ZION.

HEBREWS xii. 18-29.

AS in his epistle to the Romans the apostle had argued, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: *for* ye are not under the law, but under grace;" so here he confirms his exhortation to follow peace and holiness by the assertion, "for ye are not come unto mount Sinai, but unto mount Zion."

Mount Sinai and mount Zion are contrasted, as in the epistle to the Galatians Hagar and Sara are contrasted. The contrast is very great, striking, and far-reaching.

The apostle speaks first of Sinai. He reminds us of seven things in connection with the giving of the law.* The mount which, writing to Hebrews it was not necessary to name, is that "mount Sinai in Arabia, which gendereth to bondage." "The Lord descended upon it, and the whole

* (1) The mount touched by God; (2) Fire; (3) Blackness of cloud; (4) Darkness; (5) Thunder; (6) The sound of a trumpet; (7) The voice of God.

mount quaked greatly.”* There was fire also, that burned, symbolic of God’s jealousy, and His holy anger against sin. We read also of blackness and darkness, the thick cloud upon the mount,† and tempest; that is, thunders and lightnings on the third day in the morning. And more awful than the thunder was the sound of the trumpet, which sounded long and waxed louder and louder; and last of all, most solemn and more awful than the sound of thunder and the trumpet, the voice of words, “God spake all these words, saying,” beginning, “I am the Lord thy God;” and ending, “Thou shalt not covet.”

The terrors of the majesty of God kept the people at a distance. Even Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” Nothing can give us a more vivid impression of the awe and terror connected with the dispensation of mount Sinai than the significant fact, that even Moses, the chosen servant of God, and the mediator between God and the people, was not able to approach without fear and trembling. Nothing can show us more clearly that Moses was not the true mediator; that the true mediation by which the love of God is brought to us, and we are brought unto the holy God, is not through a sinful and finite man, but through Jesus, the holy Son of God.

* Exod. xix. 18.

† Exod. xix. 16.

We are not come to mount Sinai, but to mount Zion. Here are also mentioned seven great and solemn heavenly realities.

1. Mount Zion. Mount Sinai represents the law. It manifests the majesty of God above us as creatures, the wrath of God against us as sinners; it reveals to us God's judgment and our condemnation; it convinces us of our guilt and of our strengthlessness; it represents the state of fear and darkness, of distance and alienation from God. There is no true mediation; Moses and the angels minister, but cannot truly and fully bring God and man together. Here we are not children and heirs of salvation; here we are in bondage, and under condemnation. It is winter, without sunshine, without flower and fruit, without the song of birds, the melody of praise.

2. Mount Sinai has passed away. It was only temporary. God touched it, but did not abide there. There is another mount, even Zion. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."* Upon God's holy hill of Zion He hath set His King, even the Son. Mount Sinai represents the law, temporary and intermediate; mount Zion the Gospel, eternal and abiding; mount Sinai is connected with God's dealings with man according to respon-

* Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14.

sibility; mount Zion with the eternal election of grace. The one is touched by God as it were for a moment; the other chosen to be His habitation. The one brings fear and terror; the other brings joy and peace, because God delights in it. In the one, the very Mediator trembles; in the other, God's own Son, crowned with glory and power, brings nigh His people, who approach "boldly" in the peace and joy of Christ.

Mount Zion represents the Gospel, but we know there is a real mount Zion, of which the earthly mount Zion was only a type. We read of mount Zion, the citadel of David, the King of Israel, the place of the sanctuary of God, the glory of Jerusalem, the city of peace, where David had assembled the godly of the land, whither the tribes of the Lord went up to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We know that these earthly places symbolized the heavenly, true, and eternal Zion and Jerusalem. There is the throne of God and of the Lamb: we read of the holy city coming down out of heaven.* Jesus is preparing a place for us. The earthly Zion and Jerusalem have also a glorious future; but we believers are now come to the true mount Zion, even to the throne of grace, to the Jerusalem above, the heavenly city, free and holy.

3. We have come to myriads of angels. This

* Rev. xxi.

expression reminds us of what is written: "The Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones;"* and again, "Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him."† It is an innumerable multitude. The Lord is the Lord of hosts. While this thought fills us with awe, and helps us to realize the majesty and grandeur of the kingdom into which we have been brought, it also strengthens and gladdens the heart to think of so many bright and loving angels, who show forth God's glory, and who minister unto the heirs of salvation. When the thought of Satan and his legions brings fear, we ought to comfort ourselves with the assurance that more in number, and greater in power, and may we not also say nearer to our bodies and spirits (for they are in communion with the Lord), are the loving and watchful angels, who for Christ's sake regard us with the deepest interest and affection.‡ The moment we came to Christ, He brought us unto all the angels, who rejoice in the salvation of sinners.

4. We have also come to the general assembly of the Church of the first-born ones, whose names are written in the heavens. The term general assembly (*πανήγυρις*) implies not merely a great,

* Deut. xxxiii. 2. † Dan. vii. 10: Compare Rev. v. 11.

‡ The Bible teaching on angels has not been sufficiently woven into our daily thought. According to the teaching of the Lord's Prayer, we should always remember "as it is in heaven."

but the *full* number. And this circumstance, that *all* the members are collected, gives the assembly a character of solemn and joyous festivity.* The Church of the first-born ones, whose names are written in heaven, means evidently the New Testament believers who first trusted in Christ, who are the first-fruits unto God. As the priests in Israel represented the first-born, as Israel itself was called the first-born, and therefore the heir of the promise, so believers are chosen in Christ to be the first-born sons and heirs of the eternal inheritance.† Their names are enrolled as citizens of heaven. Christ Himself is the First-born. In eternity He is the Only-begotten; with reference to creation He who is the image of the invisible God is the *First-born* of every creature.‡ Being thus the *true First-born*, His *priesthood* is perfect. After His death on the cross, as the First-begotten of the dead,§ He entered (strictly speaking) on His priesthood. Believers possess, by virtue of their union with Jesus, the rights and privileges of primogeniture. Their names are enrolled in the lists of the heavenly city (πολίτευμα); they all enjoy the same privilege of access, and the same hope of the inheritance. When we come to Jesus, we are admitted to communion with all the saints.

5. In this blessed city of God there is no con-

* Kurtz. † Compare Eph. i. 12; James i. 18; Num. iii. 12, 13.

‡ Col. i. 15; Rev. iii. 14.

§ Rev. i. 5.

demnation, there is no more judgment. But there is order, rule, government, to which all render obedience with joy and praise. We are come to God, the Supreme Ruler and Governor, who will vindicate His people, falsely accused and unjustly oppressed, who will give unto each his true position and just reward, who at present upholds the persecuted and tried saints on earth. By "the spirits of just men made perfect," are meant the Old Testament saints. They have finished their course. The discipline of divine grace has accomplished in them the purpose of wisdom and love. Every believer is called from earth at the right, the appointed moment. The measure of sorrow and trial, experience and work, is then complete. Delivered from sin and the body of death, they enter at once into the more immediate and, need we say, conscious communion with God. They are "perfected," they have reached the end of the journey and conflict, and are free from sin. They are called "spirits," because they are still waiting for the resurrection. In one sense, they are not made perfect, "without us," till the second coming of Christ; in another sense, as there is no sowing, and working, and trading with the talent beyond the grave, they have reached their ultimate condition. The departed saints of the old dispensation are now with the Lord, in whom, as the coming Saviour, they trusted; and we are brought into

union with them because (6) we have come to the "Mediator of the new covenant." He, God and man, is the One Mediator between God and sinners; and having removed all our guilt, and overcome all obstacles which separated us from God, Jesus brings now to His people that perfect peace and joy which He Himself possesses. The apostle calls the great and glorious divine Mediator by His greatest and sweetest name—Jesus! In the Pauline epistles especially, the name of Jesus is frequently brought out as the name of greatest significance and consolation, as the name of the exalted Lord. The apostle seems to have been always hearing the Voice that said unto him, on that memorable day, "I am Jesus." This same Jesus, who died for us, is on the throne; and the blessings of the new covenant are in His pierced hands. Blessed are we, if by faith we always come to the Lord Jesus, and hear His voice: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore;" when we see it is Jesus, our brother Joseph, who is now exalted a Prince and Saviour.

Lastly (the seventh link of this chain), we have come to the blood of sprinkling.*

* (1) Mount Zion; (2) The heavenly Jerusalem; (3) The myriads of angels; (4) The Church of the First-born (The Judge, the God of all); (5) The spirits of just men; (6) The Mediator of the new covenant; (7) The blood.

The precious blood of Christ, which was shed in Golgotha, is sprinkled (using a symbol of the Old Testament sacrificial ordinances) on the conscience and heart, and sinners are thus justified and sanctified.* We have frequently had occasion to notice in this epistle the special importance attached to the blood of Christ as distinguished from His death† When we believe in Jesus, then the blood of Christ is applied to us. It is a great and solemn transaction, spiritual and real in its character. Christ is set forth by God a propitiation, and faith beholds the *blood of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary* as a great reality. Abel's blood cried to heaven, and testified against his sinful brother; but the blood of the Lord Jesus, who was hated and killed by man because He was righteous, speaks more powerfully and effectively, securing our pardon and acceptance.‡

* Compare ix. 13, 14; x. 22; xiii. 12.

† Lecture vi.

‡ Holding fast the spiritual character of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ by which we are sanctified, we may ask: When the apostle says we have come to the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus, and to the blood of sprinkling, when he teaches us that Jesus entered with His own blood into the holy of holies, or that God brought Jesus from the grave (into heaven) through (ἐν) the blood of the everlasting covenant, is the language merely figurative, reminding us that, because Christ shed His blood on the cross, He is now our High Priest and Mediator? or does he mean that the blood of Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary?

The latter view seems right for the following reasons: 1. According to the Old Testament type, the blood of the atonement, as we have already seen, pertains to the holy of holies. Jesus died outside the gate. Did He not fulfil the other part of the type, in which the

In this grand contrast of seven things, as the first link of the series was the two mounts, Sinai and Zion, so the last link is the voice of God uttering the Ten Commandments, and the blood of Jesus speaking peace. In our actual experience, the last link comes first. When we behold the blood, we are delivered out of Egypt, and from the condemnation of the law. Jesus is the door and the way. The door comes first, and then the path. The door is an open door, when we see Christ crucified. By this open door we must enter. Then comes the narrow way, the life of obedience in communion with God. But there is no walking on the narrow way *before* we enter in at the strait gate. Jesus is Alpha. Until we

high priest brought the blood into the most holy place? (ix.; xiii. 11, 12.) 2. It is written that God will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. The life is in the blood. The blood of our adorable Lord is called precious, it is contrasted with things that are corruptible, and compared with the "incorruptible" seed of the Word of God. 3. Our Lord distinguishes the body which is broken, and the blood which is shed. After His resurrection, speaking of His glorified body, He said, "It is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke xxiv. 39.) He does not say "flesh and blood;" for "flesh and blood," coexisting as in our present condition, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. xv. 50.)

This view is very fully defended by Bengel, Öttinger, and more recently by Stier. Some of their *inferences* do not seem to me scriptural. Calvin and Goodwin use expressions which tend in the same realistic direction. It is better to take Scripture literally, even when we cannot fully understand or picture to ourselves the thing stated, than to have recourse to weakening the force of the inspired expressions.

believe in the blood of Christ, we are outside the gate, and do not even see the path. The path commences when you enter in at the strait gate. What a discovery it is to one who has known only mount Sinai and the ten commandments, to behold the Lamb of God and the blood of atonement! Convinced of sin, condemned as guilty, trembling before the majesty of the Holy God, and yet feeling that only in Him are blessedness and life for the immortal and God-created spirit, the heart looks up and sees nothing but thick darkness and clouds; it can discover no blue of loving heaven-speaking peace and hope; the mighty voice, louder than the trumpet-sound, is echoed in the conscience, and there is none to help. When to such a heart is brought the message of salvation by grace through a crucified Redeemer; when he hears of Jehovah-Tsidkenu (the Lord our righteousness); of the Son of God, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; when there is declared to him complete and immediate forgiveness according to divine justice and truth, the infinite and never-changing love of God in Christ Jesus, what peace and what joy enter the soul! what astonishment, gratitude, and adoration! How beautiful is the light of peace which proceeds from the Lamb! How glorious is the love of Him who in Christ is now the Father, the justifier of the guilty who believe in Jesus! How

sweet is the welcome of the Church, into which the Spirit baptizes us! How near are the angels who rejoice with the Shepherd over His found sheep! How radiant with grace is the heavenly sanctuary! Do you know the contrast between mount Sinai and mount Zion?

But as our privilege, so our responsibility is much greater under the gospel-dispensation. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. God came down from heaven to earth, and spoke on mount Sinai; Jesus ascended from earth to heaven, and speaks now to us from mount Zion. (*v.* 25) The character of the present dispensation and of gospel-speaking is heavenly.* The heaven-descended God gave the law on Sinai. The heaven-ascended Son declares glad tidings from His throne of glory. The blood of Abel cried from earth to heaven for vengeance; the blood of the Lord Jesus speaks peace from heaven to earth. How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Mount Sinai passed away, and the dispensation of the law has vanished; but Jesus is the Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant. Jesus speaking from heaven is God's most perfect and loving, as well as His ultimate message. Jesus is the first and the last; He shall come again and reign for evermore. Heaven and earth shall pass

* Compare John iii. 31; 1 Peter i. 12.

away; all things that can be shaken shall be removed; Jesus shall make all things new, and the saints who have learned on earth the new song of eternal redemption shall rejoice in Him for ever. How can we escape if we neglect the eternal salvation?

How solemn is it to hear the message proceeding from Him who is exalted above all heavens: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." To listen to the voice of the eternal Word, the Only-begotten of the Father, who declares to us the salvation-will of God, the counsel of eternal love—is most solemn and awful. It is the greatest and most sublime message. It is the sweetest message; for the salvation it declares has its source in electing love, its channel is the sacrifice of Christ, and its end in the glory, even the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is the ultimate and everlasting revelation of God; Heaven and earth shall pass away; this present world shall vanish; but the word of Christ, the word of the gospel, shall abide for evermore.

The blessed gospel reveals to us God our Father in Jesus, and therefore perfect peace; it reveals also the inheritance of glory, and therefore a lively hope for the future. This peace and hope are full of solemnity, we therefore serve God acceptably and with godly fear; for we know that our God is a consuming fire. (v. 29.)

Before we are brought to Christ, we know there is a spiritual world as well as a world to come. Conscience testifies, and the heart believes, that beside the outer world, there is the true and spiritual world ; in which God is the great Centre, Lord, and Judge, and that our true and real life depends on our relation to God Most High, whether we are with Him and in His favour, or whether God is against us, and we are far from Him.

We know also the future world. From earliest childhood we know that life is short, that all flesh is grass, that the flower fadeth, that the dearest and sweetest tie of earth must be broken, that the world passeth away, that it is appointed unto man to die. When we have scarcely a past to remember, when we have only emerged out of the mysterious morning-land of infancy, we already look forward to a boundless, never-ending future ; for God has written eternity in the human heart. When the child of man stands thus before God, not daring to lift up his eye unto the high and holy heaven ; when God is above and against him ; when he is convinced of sin, and yet thirsteth after the living God ; and when he knows he is hastening to eternity on the wings of inexorable time—then out of the highest sanctuary, high above the clouds of Sinai, high above all created heights, comes forth the voice of

the gospel, majestic and sweet, full of authority and grace, bringing light and love, "I am Jesus." In this gospel we hear that all that separated the heart from God, all that prevented the heart from breathing the atmosphere of divine life and love, is removed, and that according to the perfections of God. And now that sin, the condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the power of Satan are taken out of the way, the heart looks up to the Father and to Jesus—it looks forward to the Bridegroom's return and the glory.

What else can we say to such a gift, but *thanks!* glory to God! Now we believe, and trust in God. Faith towards God (*fiducia*) never was in our hearts till Jesus came revealing the Father's love and His grace. Faith is the daughter of revelation, the echo of the divine voice, the reflection of the manifestation of Christ to the soul.

In Christ, whom God hath appointed heir of all things, we have also the promise of the inheritance. The object of God's eternal purpose was the new, eternal, holy, and perfect world, which can never be moved; the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. They who trust in Jesus have received in Him the kingdom which cannot be moved. The apostle speaks now of this eternal and immovable kingdom as our great and immediate prospect; having

such a promise, we are without excuse if we refuse to listen to the Lord in heaven. (vv. 25-29.)

The prophet Haggai, whom the apostle quotes, comforted his people, who in troublous times, in the day of small things, were cast down. The glory of Solomon's temple was remembered by the aged, and the present seemed to be a time of weakness and trial. Then the prophet announces that the second temple would excel the first in glory, that David's house would be exalted. But before this kingdom is established, and this glory manifested, the whole world of nations will be shaken, and mighty signs of divine judgment and power will be seen throughout the realm of creation. "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." This catastrophe, *crisis* in the world's history, *hope* of the godly, reminds the prophets of the awful signs and wonders and voices at the exodus and the giving of the law. God shall again appear with all His saints. All His enemies shall be subdued, and Jehovah be King of the whole earth.

From this prophecy the apostle infers that the things that will be shaken will be removed, in order that there may be established that which is to be abiding. In other words, that the kingdom will be established which, according to the

prophetic word, is to take the place of the powers and kingdoms of the world;* that the age will commence in which the name of the Lord alone shall be exalted, after all that is proud and lofty has been abased.†

Let us therefore have and show gratitude for God's unspeakable gift. If Jesus is ours, need we, can we, covet anything?‡ If the kingdom is ours, are we not separated from this present evil world? Let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear.

For our God, God in Christ, is a consuming fire. In Jesus we behold the holy, righteous, jealous God. We trust and rejoice, but it is with solemn awe, with godly fear. We have been brought nigh to God; we live in the presence

* Dan. ii. vii.

† Isaiah ii.

‡ "In the prophetic word the final manifestation of Jehovah is compared with the redemption out of Egypt, and the descent on mount Sinai. (Micah vii. 15; Hab. iii.) What the LXX. render 'yet once more' means, that between the prophet's time and the final catastrophe is only one period; that is, one uniform period, possessing the same character; and that this period will be short." (Condensed from Delitzsch.) The dealings of God with Israel in Egypt and on mount Sinai form the beginning and type of that final manifestation of Jehovah in judgment on His enemies and in grace to His people, in the establishment of the theocracy (Christocracy), of which Haggai prophesies. Hence the apostle's quotation, "yet once more," gives the true meaning of the passage. Only *one* other great crisis, and then the final change of things that can be shaken and moved into the enduring and abiding kingdom, which was the purpose of God from the beginning.

‡ Compare the first word, "I am the Lord thy God," and the last commandment, "Thou shalt not covet."

of the Most High. The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all that is within us keep silence before Him. Let us worship and serve as priests, the first-born sons who are separated by the blood of the covenant, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ; as kings who do not suffer sin to have dominion over them, and even in this present time of weakness and suffering live in the spirit of the future glory. "Our God is a consuming fire," perfect light, perfect love. In the everlasting covenant He is the Lord our God, who hath chosen us to be His, entirely and for ever.

CHAPTER XL.

EXHORTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

HEBREWS xiii. 1-16.

THE argument and exhortation of the apostle seem to have reached their solemn and impressive conclusion in the twelfth chapter, especially in the heart-searching words of the last verse: "For our God is a consuming fire." But, as we find in other Pauline epistles,* that after the apparent conclusion of the doctrinal and practical portion, the apostle adds isolated concise counsels, injunctions and benedictions, so also here. As if the apostle could not separate himself either from the theme or the people, so dear to his heart, and as if he felt that he had still much to communicate out of his abundant treasure of knowledge and love.

But this concluding chapter possesses a special interest and value, because we seem to see more

* Compare in Romans, first conclusion, Rom. xv. 33; second, Rom. xvi. 24; and third, 27.

distinctly the writer's individuality, and his personal relation to the Hebrews. As we read the chapter, in which many Pauline peculiarities occur, and in which we meet for the first time in this epistle the personal pronoun "I," we see more clearly the beloved countenance of the apostle, and feel more confirmed that we have been listening to the well-known voice of the chosen witness to "the Gentiles, and the children of Israel."*

Verses 1-3. "Let brotherly love (*φιλαδελφια*) continue." The intimate connection between love to God and love to the brethren, is constantly pointed out both by the Lord Himself and in the apostolic writings. In the epistles of John, this seems almost the central thought.

"Love never ceaseth;" and as the Hebrews had just been reminded that the things that are made shall be shaken and removed, they are now exhorted to let *that* abide which is of God, which is eternal, even love. Even prophecies, tongues, and knowledge shall vanish; but love never faileth. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us."† Love to the brethren is always represented as the first indication and fruit of the new life‡ as well as the final aim and result of divine grace.

The Hebrews had given striking proof that they possessed this mark of Christ's disciples, and the apostle had commended them for their

* Acts ix. 15. † 1 John iv. 12. ‡ 1 John v. 1; Acts xvi. 33.

love, their sympathy, and their compassionate and helpful charity.* Like the divine Master, he connects exhortation with commendation. We must watch and cherish the gifts of grace which we have received. Love to the brethren manifests itself specially in sympathy with the afflicted. "Whether one member suffer, all the members of the body suffer with it."† The children of God are to resemble their heavenly Father, who is a lover of the stranger.‡ In showing hospitality they are often rewarded by receiving messengers of divine truth and blessing. The disciples of Jesus are to remember with sympathy and intercession their brethren in adversity; as long as we are in the body we may all be called to suffer, and the fellow-heirs of glory ought to abound in kindness and tenderness towards those who are counted worthy to endure affliction and persecution. It is one of our privileges on earth to weep with them that weep, and to comfort and help the Master Himself in succouring His tried and fainting disciples. Thus also shall we retain the spirit of strangers and pilgrims, whose home is above.

The next exhortations have reference to earthly life in two important aspects. First, as to marriage. It was instituted by God in Paradise before the fall, it was irradiated by the presence and blessing of Jesus at Cana, it is invested in

* vi. 10; x. 33.

† I Cor. xii. 26.

‡ Deut. x. 18, 19.

Scripture with a sacredness most solemn and tender, for it is used as a symbol of the relation between Jehovah and His people, between Jesus and the Church. Let marriage then be regarded as honourable by all. Some are not called in providence to enter into this state; some, like the apostle Paul, voluntarily choose a single life, that they may serve God more freely; but let all regard this relation, as appointed by God, holy and full of blessing. And where the sacred character of marriage and of the family is recognised and felt, the result will be purity. All sins of impurity are sins against His holy ordinance of marriage, and against the divine institution of the family. God Himself will judge those who violate this fundamental law of His goodness.

Secondly, as regards the occupation whereby we earn our livelihood. Covetousness is idolatry; the love of money* is the root of all evil. Jesus commands us, not to lay up treasure on earth, because our heart is where our treasure is. He does not merely forbid us to set our affection on earthly treasure, but to cut off the possibility of such heart-estrangement from God by not aiming at the accumulation of wealth. And as in the sermon on the mount, so here, covetousness is viewed as connected with a lack of faith in the living God; for God Himself (in the Scripture) hath said, "I will

* ἀφιλάργυρος. Compare 1 Tim. iii. 3; vi. 10.

never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* The first expression assures us that God will never withdraw His guiding hand ; the second, that He will never withdraw His protecting presence.† Having God’s gracious and considerate promise, may we not, like David, say with a soothed and quiet heart, “The Lord is on my side ; I will not fear : what can man do unto me ? The Lord taketh my part with them that help me.”‡

Our earthly life will be full of peace and contentment, of light and strength, though not without the needed difficulties and chastenings, if we obey these apostolic injunctions ; if we cherish love to the brethren, and a sympathetic, considerate, and helpful spirit towards the suffering and needy ; if we cultivate family affection and communion ; and if we keep ourselves free from the feverish race for riches and worldly distinction, and learn to be content with such things as we have, eating our meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Have we not “enough” for the journey ? When we reach home, and Jesus asks us, “Did you ever lack anything ?” what will our answer be ?

Having warned them against the dangers of selfishness, fleshly lusts, and covetousness, the apostle proceeds to warn them against the dangers

* Deut. xxxi. 6-8 ; 1 Chron. xxviii. 20 ; and often in Isaiah.

† Kurtz.

‡ Psalm cxviii. 6.

threatening their faith and loyalty to Christ. He reminds them of the guides, the teachers and rulers, which God had given to them—men who laboured in the ministry of the Word, had sealed their testimony in their death. (v. 7.) Some have thought the reference is pre-eminently to martyrs like Stephen. But all their departed teachers and elders had shown them in life and death what they had declared by their word: the just shall live by *faith*. They had passed away; but the great Prophet, the great Apostle and High Priest, the true Shepherd, remained—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is the only foundation, and His the only name. The heart finds rest in thinking of Him, the Rock of ages, the eternal, unchanging Son of God, our Lord, Saviour, and Mediator.

Of this inexhaustible verse, let us only indicate a few aspects for meditation. We contemplate here the Son of God as the Christ, set up from all eternity in the divine counsel. We behold Him as incarnate, God and man, two natures in one person. By a bold anticipation, not more bold than true, we call Him Jesus Christ even before His advent.* He is eternal, and yet He has a yesterday, to-day, and an endless future. His “yesterday” has no beginning, but it ends with His burial in that new tomb. His “to-day” com-

* Compare Phil. ii. 5.

mences with His resurrection, and is even now—this acceptable year of the Lord, the gospel dispensation—the “to-day” while we hear the voice of grace. His “for ever” commences with His second advent. His dominion is everlasting. And throughout He is the same. From all eternity He is the Lover of our souls, the Friend of sinners, the Advocate, Intercessor, and Mediator; His incarnation is only the manifestation of the mind that was in Him from all eternity. Let us adore, and adoring, let us love and rejoice. Let us adore Jesus as our apostle did, when he, in this very epistle, applied to Jesus the words: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth;” and, with the beloved disciple, let us hear the voice of Jesus in heaven, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.”* And thus beholding the glory, let us also behold the love, divine and brotherly, of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, as Christ, Prophet, Priest, and King. Time’s waves and billows cannot move our Rock; we are but as grass, and as a flower of the field, but the eternal mercy, without beginning and without end, is upon us.†

* Rev. i. 8. The same expressions which we read in the prophet Isaiah of Jehovah, “He is First and Last,” Α and Ω; there are many intermediate letters, and some of them rebellious ones, that assert themselves. But He alone abideth.—BENGEL.

† Psalm ciii.

This is the sure foundation on which we are to build. The heart can only be established on this Rock, and only by grace (*v.* 9); for by grace (not by works) we were built on the stone which God laid in Zion; and only by grace, continually received by faith, we continue. The various Jewish laws (teaching both complicated and foreign from the gospel ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις) concerning eating and drinking, whether it refers to daily ordinary life, or to the sacrificial meals, stand in no connection with the life and growth of faith. For, as the type already taught, of that sacrifice which was offered up as an atonement for sin, only the blood was brought unto the most holy; the bodies were burnt outside the camp.* The meat of other sin-offerings had to be eaten by the priests in the holy place ("it is most holy"); but the sin-offering for atonement was to be carried forth without the camp. The priests were forbidden to eat of it.†

In the fulfilment Jesus suffered without the gate. The beloved city, Jerusalem, is viewed as the camp. Our Lord was crucified and buried outside the tent and the camp. In the type the sacrifice was slain in the outer court, and the body burnt outside the camp. In the fulfilment the idea is carried out even *more fully*. Jesus was the sin-offering. God made Him to be "sin" for us.

* Lev. vi. 36.

† Lev. xvi. 27. Contr. Lev. vi. 25, 26.

He was numbered with the transgressors. To the eye of the world and of the unbelieving Jews, He was a transgressor dying on the accursed tree.

By His precious blood, with which He entered the most holy, He has sanctified us. Here also the fulfilment is beyond the type. The blood is brought into the heavenly sanctuary, and we are separated unto God, and perfected for ever.

We who believe possess therefore the true altar.* Of the type of this altar they who serve the tabernacle were not allowed to eat. But the

* Verse 10 has had a great variety of interpretations, and offers many difficulties. *ἐχομεν* can, I think, refer only to believers. The expression *have* is emphatic in this epistle. *θυσιαστήριον*, altar, does not refer to the actual cross, of which it cannot be said that we have it, but to Christ Himself, as the sin-offering. As Owen remarks, that which the apostle throughout opposes unto all the utensils, services, and sacrifices of the tabernacle, is Christ alone. So here Christ is both sacrifice and altar, and by Him we offer the sacrifice of praise and good works. "They that serve the tabernacle." The Levitical priests (tabernacle is always used for temple) had no right to eat of the typical sin-offering of atonement, and in their ignorance of Christ and unbelief they did not know the true altar.

The connection of thought seems to be: Do not think of the meat of the temple altar; look to Christ in heaven, in order that your heart may be established. He is our altar and sacrifice. Even in the type there was no eating connected with the sin-offering for atonement. Now Christ has sanctified you, and brought you nigh unto God. And this very position calls on you to go outside the camp and bear the reproach of Christ, to separate yourself from that which is waxing old.

The thought lies very near, that in the fulfilment Christ gives us His body, which is meat indeed; and His blood, which is drink indeed. This however is connected with the Passover, which is the most comprehensive sacrificial type, and does not fall, we think, within the scope of the apostle's present argument.

reality is hid from them. By faith we behold it, and our hearts are established.

But our position, while it is heavenly with Christ, is here upon earth outside the camp. If with Jesus we have entered into the holy of holies, let us also go unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. We must be separate from all that is against Christ, from all that beguiles men from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, and substitutes forms and outward legal observances for the body, the substance. In proportion as our worship, our affections, our aims are heavenly, as we seek the future and continuing city, we must expect to bear the reproach of Christ. For the "*cross*" of Christ will always be "outside the camp." True faith in Jesus will never, in this dispensation, be according to the spirit and taste of the world. Spiritual worship will always be an enigma to the world, and its aversion.

But we have Jesus; and by Him we draw near as priests, and with sacrifices well-pleasing to the Father. (v. 15.) We now worship the Father offering unto God praise, and bringing unto Him gifts with cheerful and thankful hearts. Praise and gifts are the sacrifices of the Christian. Nor must we forget that while there is nothing meritorious in our offerings, yet the praise of our lips, if it proceeds from the heart, and is confirmed by our lives, and the offering of our

gifts, be it out of our affluence or poverty, be it the word of sympathy or the sacrifice of time and talent, are pleasing to God. So the apostle says here, "With such sacrifices God is well pleased;" and the apostle Peter, speaking of the same spiritual sacrifices, calls them "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Again, when alluding to the gift of money sent by the Philippians, Paul says, "The things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Let not a one-sided view of justification by faith, or our latent sloth and selfishness deprive us of this most comforting and stimulating teaching of Scripture, that both our words and works, our praise-worship and our offerings and ministry to the poor and the house of God, are regarded by God *with delight*, and accepted by Him; that thus praise and works have a *substantive importance*, not merely as evidencing our faith, but as actual sacrifices offered through Jesus, and accepted sacrifices with which the Lord is pleased.

When God has taken away all our iniquity, and has received us graciously, then, to use the significant expression of the prophet Hosea, "we render the calves of our lips." Song is but the outward expression of the inner praise, and of the general confession of Christ in word and life.

The first song of praise is recorded in Exodus; for it is redemption, which brings praise. In

Paradise man was able to sing unto God, the Creator, and with the angels ascribe glory and thanksgiving unto the Lord. But after the fall, sinners could only praise through redeeming grace. In Egypt, the house of bondage, were heard tearful sighs and earnest supplications; on the great night of the Paschal lamb Israel waited in solemn and awe-filled silence; at the Red Sea the cry of anguish unuttered rose up from the heart of Moses; but at last came completed redemption. The Red Sea separated Israel from Egypt; old things had passed away; and "*then* sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously."

This is our song: "Christ our passover was slain, Christ our Lord is risen again." On this God-made day may we indeed rejoice and be glad.* For He who died for us, liveth now for evermore.

It is good to give thanks unto God; to behold the beauty of the Lord; to rejoice in Him, our unchanging, faithful, and ever-blessed God. This thankfulness is an offering unto the Lord. He is pleased with it. Jesus still asks: Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Jesus loves to hear the voice of melody. Seven times a day, constantly, let us praise God.

The heart that praises God is delivered from

* Psalm cxviii.

anxious care and self-centred gloom. The heart that praises God is like the temple filled with God's glory.* Praise is heaven anticipated; in praise we even now join angels and perfected saints.

How much did the apostle Paul abound in praise! His epistles are full of thanksgiving—of doxologies. His heart was always giving thanks, and ascribing glory. Think only of this man, who, like his divine Master, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. From the hour that Jesus appeared to him, from those three days of awful, intense soul-dealings with God, in which his whole past life, righteousness, strength, were taken from him, and through dying to the law he became alive unto God, what was his whole earthly career but taking up the cross, and following Jesus? Hated by Israel, whom he loved so profoundly; persecuted, derided, imprisoned, and scourged; in poverty, in toil, in danger by land and sea; with the burden of all the churches upon his priestly heart; suspected by Jewish Christians, grieved and hindered by schismatic and self-willed disciples; without the solace of wife or child; going from city to city with this only certainty, that bonds and afflictions awaited him everywhere—can you picture to yourself this man of prayer, of vigil, of tears, of heart-breathed in-

* 1 Chron. xxii. 5.

tercessions for unbelieving Israel, and for unfaithful Christians; this lonely, suffering man, with his burning soul, with his toil-worn frame, with his body bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, with all the world against him, and with the martyr's death before him? Oh, then, see that in all this he was constantly offering the sacrifice of praise!* In his heart is melody; he finishes his course with joy; and out of the overflowing thankfulness of his soul he writes to all the Christian churches, "Rejoice in the Lord: and again I say, Rejoice!"

Learn from him to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

We praise God in declaring His name. The preacher's petition is: "Open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." I praise God when I preach Jesus, the Saviour of the sinner, the High Priest, example and joy of the saint.† To confess and to praise is the privilege of God's people, to show to the world that we are at peace, that we rejoice, that heaven is our home even now, that in sorrow and prosperity God is our song. We are to praise God always. When Christians are in deep sorrow, and when they are called to endure great trials,

* Phil. ii. 17; iv. 4.

† Some churches are reproached for being preaching, and not praying churches. Let us remember that true spiritual preaching is also praising God, and declaring His name,

it is often given unto them to rejoice in God, and to praise Him who is good, and whose mercy endureth for ever. Many of David's most jubilant songs were written in hours of persecution and distress. The Christians who are most deficient in praise are not the suffering, poor, bed-ridden, and afflicted; but those whose earthly path is smooth and easy, who fall into a languid and dull routine, whose hearts become forgetful of the Lord and His marvellous love.

A joyous heart is also a generous heart. When we praise the Lord, the bountiful giver, and thank Him for the gifts of His grace—gifts so undeserved, precious, and abundant—our hearts will be liberal. We shall not forget to do good and to communicate; rather shall we be anxious to discover the good works ordained for us, that we may walk in them, to find out the poor and needy, the lowly and afflicted members of Christ, that we may help and cheer them.

With such sacrifices God is well pleased. He beholds in them our gratitude and love, a manifestation of the Spirit of His own Son, who for our sakes became poor. When we "abound" in this grace also,* the blessing of God on our souls will descend plentifully, and we shall reap an abundant harvest of spiritual fruit.

Let us study and imitate the example of the

* 2 Cor. viii. 7.

first congregation at Jerusalem. They were filled with the Spirit, they rejoiced and praised, they did not suffer any member to lack. And thus they found favour with the people, and the beauty of the Lord was upon them; and the Lord added to the Church daily.* Study the exhortation to the grace of liberality given by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians; so urgent, so loving, so full of the gospel. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift"† is the conclusion as well as the foundation and the centre of his admonition.

The sacrifice of praise and of good works‡ can only be offered "by Christ." As all the offerings of the old dispensation rested on the atonement, through the sacrifice for sin, as the necessary foundation, so it is only the forgiven children of God who offer now the sacrifice of praise, confessing the name of Christ, and declaring His truth; who by ministering unto the saints, by doing good to all men, by helping the mission-work of the Church, bring thank-offerings to God. And as both these sacrifices rest on the one and only sacrifice of Christ, and proceed out of a renewed heart; as both the praise and the works are *fruits* of the Spirit, brought forth by the living branches, so it is by Christ's intercession they ascend unto the Father, and are well-pleasing unto Him.

* Acts ii. 44-47.

† = Cor. viii and ix. Two beautiful and important chapters.

‡ "Ohne Loben und Lieben vergeh keine Stunde." Let no hour pass without praise and love.

CHAPTER XLI.

EXHORTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL—CONTINUED.

HEBREWS xiii. 17-25.

TEACHERS and rulers* are again recognized, and the Hebrews are exhorted to obey them, and to yield themselves to their teaching and rule, to adapt themselves to their peculiarities, and to carry out their wishes and arrangements with a willing mind; for therein God is honoured, and the welfare of the congregation promoted. Ministers watch for your souls as they that must give account of their stewardship. Their responsibility towards God is great; their labour towards you is incessant and anxious. You may well meet them with confidence and a plastic mind, trusting that their counsels are the result of thought, prayer, and experience. Nothing discourages a minister more than the want of response on the part of Christians to his advice, entreaty, and plans. He returns from his work

* Verses 7 and 17 show that there was a stated ministry, that there were recognised and regular teachers and pastors in the congregation, whose gifts not only, but whose office was acknowledged.

to God, not with joy, but with sighs and tears, with complaints and grief. "This is unprofitable for the people." They only hinder and retard the blessing which would otherwise come to their hearts, homes, and neighbourhood.

"Pray for us." This is eminently Pauline. No other apostle writes thus, requesting the intercession of the Church.* It is very instructive and touching to notice how constantly and earnestly the apostle asks the Churches to pray for him, that utterance may be given him; that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; that he may be preserved amidst the persecution of unbelievers; that he may be restored to the brethren. He who laboured more than the other apostles, and who was endowed with so many gifts, seems to have had the greatest craving for sympathy, for affection, for communion, and the most vivid conviction that God only giveth the increase; that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Of all the apostles, Paul was the most affectionate, the most tender-hearted, the most brotherly, fatherly, motherly. "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also

* Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; Phil. 22; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1.

our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." And none was more willing to be nothing, nay, to be accounted as the offscouring of the earth, that Christ alone may be exalted. The reference to "a good conscience" is very touching. His whole apostolic life is the comment. His farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, while it reveals his "tears" as the characteristic feature of his ministry, also discloses the high standard of integrity, unselfishness, and blamelessness, at which, in common with Joshua and Samuel, he constantly aimed.

He asks specially prayer for himself, that he may be "restored to them the sooner." From this expression it is evident that he had been with them at some former period, that he wishes and intends to go to them again, but that this depends on circumstances, which may either retard or expedite his return. He requests their prayers that he may be set free.

Verses 20, 21. The apostle concludes with a benediction, very comprehensive, and in a manner a summary of the whole epistle.

"The God of peace" is likewise a Pauline expression. It does not occur in any other book of the New Testament. In the Pauline epistles we meet with it frequently.*

* 1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 16; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Rom. xv. 33; xvi. 20; Phil. iv. 9.

1. The Author of peace.

From all eternity God purposed in Himself the counsel of peace; and when by reason of sin, discord and misery came into the world, the Lord always comforted His people by the promise of redemption, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." In the fulness of time came Jesus, the Peace-maker, and He declared the love of God, and preached the acceptable year of the Lord; and when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, the Father made peace through the blood of His cross. Jesus Himself is our peace; but it is the God of peace who gave Jesus, and who by His atonement made peace, and reconciled all things to Himself. For all things are of God; of Him are we in Christ Jesus, and of Him Jesus is made unto us all in all. The Spirit leads us to see in and through a crucified and exalted Redeemer the God of peace.

Peace means not merely calmness and rest of conscience and heart, based on the righteousness of God, but it means also restoration to health and well-being; or rather, since in Christ God makes all things new, not a restoration to Adam's state of innocence, but the creating us anew after His image. This seems to be the reason, why the title God of peace is connected by the apostle with our sanctification, our being made like unto

Jesus: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and likewise in our passage, "The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do His will." The God of peace can have no other purpose than our perfect blessedness and glory, that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. This purpose is fulfilled in Jesus, and through His precious blood. Our peace is complete the moment we believe in Jesus; our peace is consummated when we are presented unto the Father at the coming of our Lord. In like manner we are still looking forward to our salvation and our adoption.*

2. Jesus the channel of peace.

Our Lord Jesus was the Paschal Lamb on Calvary. From that moment our peace was purchased, and we were identified with the substitute. Now the Lamb that was slain is also the good Shepherd, that laid down His life for the sheep; He is not merely the good, true, genuine Shepherd; He is also the great Shepherd, the mighty, sublime, the only one, who leads the flock out of the grave to the heavenly glory. He is here contrasted with Moses. "Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the Shepherd

* 1 Peter i. 5, 9; Rom. viii. 23.

of the flock?*" We read also, "By the blood of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."† God brought Him not merely again, but up even into heaven. For Jesus returned not to the days of His humiliation and flesh; He was glorified, and He ascended high above all heavens, that He might fill all things. It is God who raised and exalted Him, and us with Him; God has thereby made peace and perfection.

3. *God works in us.*

Have we thus risen to the thought of the God of peace, the Redeemer, the Restorer, who through the sufferings of Jesus, and by His blood, delivered us from all evil, and has raised us together with Christ, unto a new, spiritual, and endless life, then we can understand the benediction, that God should work *in us* both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are humbled by the sense of our trangessions, of our sins of ignorance and omission, and above all of the sinfulness of our old nature. Let us be exalted by the grace of God. True we groan in this tabernacle, being burdened, but we rejoice in God. The Lord works in us. He gives good desires, true petitions, living words and works. He prepares us for the work in time, as He prepared the work for us in eternity. He works in

* Isa. lxiii. 11.

† Zech. ix. 11.

us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, for what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. The cup of cold water given to a disciple, the gift of gratitude and kindness sent to Paul, the visit of Onesiphorus to the prisoner, the word spoken in season to the thoughtless or the afflicted, the affection and training given to our children, the disciplined walk at home and in the world, the faithful and diligent discharge of duty in our earthly calling—all is begun in us, carried out and finished by the grace of God, by His holy Spirit, and it is well-pleasing in His sight. Conscious as we must be of our failures and sins, let us rejoice in the mercy of our heavenly Father. He regards all Spirit-wrought words, feelings, and works with delight.

And all is wrought *through Jesus Christ*. For He is our life and strength. Only abiding in Him can the branches live and bear fruit. The spirit in us is not a substitute for Christ, but the connecting-link between the Lord and us. Thus the divine energy within us acts simply through *our faith in Jesus*. Lean then on Jesus, and you will conquer sin. Trust in Him, and your strength will be renewed. Look with the eye of faith to the Lord, and you will receive not merely the commandment, but the spirit and the power to obey it; you will not merely see the example, but be conformed to His image.

The apostle describes his epistle as the word of

exhortation. (v. 22.) For his object throughout was to exhort the Hebrews to continue steadfast; to consider the great Apostle and High Priest of their profession; to live by faith; to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Scripture exhortation is based on doctrine, or rather on the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. *All* Scripture teaching is practical, and *only* Scripture teaching is practical, because godliness can result only from beholding, believing, and loving God in Christ. The whole Scripture is given us that we may be furnished unto every good work, strengthened for every duty, and fortified against all temptation. No doctrine is rightly understood unless it appeals to conscience and heart; unless it affects our walk and conversation. To separate life from doctrine is to separate life from the revelation of God, from Christ; and is not He our life?

But this word of exhortation, as it comes out of the bright atmosphere of truth, so it comes out of the genial atmosphere of affection. As in the epistle to the Romans, the messenger of God does not command, but beseech; the very mercies of God are the heart-constraining motive and the sustaining strength of obedience.

The apostle asks a favourable and loving reception of His word. In the epistle to the Romans the great apostle, in that spirit of humility and meekness which characterized him, writes in like

manner: "Nevertheless, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God." He calls the exhortation short, "in few words;" not with reference to the length of the letter, but to the proportion between the length of the epistle and the comprehensive and sublime subject of which it treats. It was necessary to bring the whole subject of the heavenly high-priesthood before them; and this vast and grand subject he endeavoured to put before them briefly, so as not to tax their patience too severely.

Verses 22-25. With the benediction the epistle is concluded, just as in 1 Thess. v. 23. The epistolary form has been gradually adopted. The concluding verses are quite in the form of a letter. The apostle uses the first person singular, and addresses his readers quite personally.

Verse 23. He cheers them with the news that Timothy (whom he loved so dearly, and to whom he likes to refer in his epistles) had obtained again liberty. With him, if he comes shortly, he hopes to see them. The apostle, it seems, had already left Rome, and was anxious to start on his journey from Italy to the readers of this epistle. He sends them salutations from the brethren in Italy.

Verse 24. The apostles, and especially Paul, address their epistles rather to the people than the

teachers and elders,* including women, children, servants, young people, they write to all.† Paul sends a message to Archippus by the Colossians.‡ So here. "This epistle, containing strong meat for the perfect, is addressed to the whole congregation. If any part of Scripture was to be kept from the common people, we might fancy it would be this epistle. The writings of the apostles, as well as the prophets, were read in the public assembly, how much more ought it now to be left to every one to read them according to his need?"§

The concluding benediction, "Grace be with you all," is common to all the (thirteen) epistles of the apostle Paul. "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."|| The expressions are sometimes slightly varied; but the substance of all his subscription is the same: "Grace be with you all." Now when the apostle mentions, as a token whereby an epistle might be known as his, this concluding benediction, and not the fact that his name is prefixed at the commencement; and when we observe that the epistles of Peter, of John, of James, and of Jude conclude with

* Phil. i. 1.

† Eph. v. 22; 1 John ii. 18; 2 John i.; 1 Peter iii. 8; v. 5.

‡ Col. iv. 17.

§ BENGEL. Very seasonable words at this present time of sacerdotalism.

|| 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18.

words entirely different,* may we not regard this as an additional confirmation of the Pauline authorship of our book?

“Grace be with you all. Amen.”

This is the most comprehensive, the best, the sweetest wish. Grace bringeth salvation. Grace contains all things pertaining to life and godliness. By grace we have been saved; by grace we stand; in grace we rejoice, and grace will end in glory. May the free, unmerited, boundless, all-sufficient love of the Father in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, shed for the redemption of guilty and helpless sinners, be with us through the power of the Holy Ghost. By Jesus, and in Jesus, we say Amen. For He is the Amen, in whom all the promises of God are sealed.

* *Entirely* different. Take the trouble to compare James v. 20; 1 Peter v. 14; 2 Peter iii. 18; 1 John v. 21; 2 John 13; 3 John 14; Jude 25. Is this accidental?

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"THE atoning work is done,
The Victim's blood is shed,
And Jesus now is gone
His people's cause to plead;
He stands in heaven their great High Priest,
And bears their names upon His breast.

"No temple made with hands
His place of service is ;
In heaven itself He stands,
A heavenly priesthood His :
In Him the shadows of the law
Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw.

"And though awhile He be
Hid from the eyes of men,
His people look to see
Their great High Priest again :
In brightest glory He will come,
And take His waiting people home."

BOOKS BY ADOLPH SAPHIR.

CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES.

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